

Cabinet exempts 50% of newsprint tariffs

AMMAN (Petra) — The Cabinet Saturday decided to exempt 50 per cent of newsprint used by newspapers annually from tariffs charged by the government, with the exception of the sales tax. The decision means that the newspapers will be exempted from 25 per cent of the tariffs they used to pay. The decision stipulates that these newspapers must commit themselves not to raise newspaper prices and not to hike charges for government advertisements. Newspaper publishers in Jordan had recently decided to increase advertisement charges and prices of newspapers effective April 1 to be able to face a more than 100 per cent increase in the cost of newsprint in the last eight months. The Cabinet, meeting under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, also decided to form four Jordanian delegations to participate in various Arab meetings and two other teams to negotiate with the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg over obtaining two loans.

Sahaf in Oman

MUSCAT (AFP) — Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Saad Al Sahaf held talks here Saturday with Omani leaders ahead of a U.N. Security Council review of the crippling U.N. embargo imposed on his country. Mr. Sahaf brought a message from President Saddam Hussein to Omani's Sultan Qaboos and met with Foreign Minister Yusuf Ben Alawi Ben Abdullah, the official agency OMA reported. The meeting focused on "developments in the situation in the Gulf and the review Monday by the U.N. Security Council of the embargo imposed on Iraq" after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the agency added. Oman is a non-permanent member of the Security Council. Mr. Sahaf arrived here Saturday after a two-day visit to Qatar (see page 12).

Deutch named to head CIA

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The White House on Saturday nominated the number two official at the Defense Department, John Deutch, to head the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) after the president's first choice stepped aside. Mr. Deutch replaces President Bill Clinton's nomination of Michael Carns, a retired air force general. Mr. Carns asked that his name be withdrawn on Saturday after it was learned that he may have violated U.S. immigration law by helping the Philippine nephew of a former cook for the Carns family come to the United States. Mr. Clinton said he accepted Mr. Carns' withdrawal request with "profound regret." Mr. Deutch had previously been under consideration for the post.

Khartoum suffers water shortage

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan's capital is facing a water shortage, and a senior government official has blamed his colleagues for withholding money needed to alleviate the crisis. More than a million people live in Khartoum and its environs, built where the Blue Nile and the White Nile meet. The shortage is due to a lack of funds for building drinking water facilities, said Farouk Al Tayeb, head of the Khartoum water supply authority. The authority produces some 390,000 cubic metres a day, while the capital needs some 600,000 cubic metres a day for its inhabitants, he said Saturday. He did not say why the government had halted spending on water facilities, but the government has struggled with an economic crisis for years.

Kuwait detains 4 trespassers

KUWAIT (AP) — Security authorities arrested four Iraqis who crossed illegally into Kuwait in separate incidents last week, the Interior Ministry said Saturday. Ministry spokesman Adel Al Ibrahim said one of the alleged trespassers was wounded before his arrest. He said a coast guard patrol spotted two Iraqis in a boat approaching Kuwait's northern coast on Thursday and fired in the air to force them to stop. "They did not stop and headed to the shore where they were shot at. One of them was injured in the shoulder," Colonel Ibrahim said. The man was being treated in a local hospital, he said. But his condition was not known.

Kazakh president disbands assembly

ALMATY (AFP) — Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev dissolved the parliament and his government on Saturday, concentrating all power in his hands. Mr. Nazarbayev disbanded the legislature after the Central Asian country's constitutional court declared that the March 1994 parliamentary elections had been illegal. The president said he would have to consider whether or not to hold new elections.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية مستقلة تعكس آراء المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية. الراي.

Developing world wants more than words to fight poverty

Copenhagen summit closes today with declaration

COPENHAGEN (Agencies) — World leaders, pledging to stamp out the scourges of poverty and injustice, opened a U.N. summit on Saturday that will approve a plan of action to help the hundreds of millions who live below the breadline. But developing countries — including China and India, the two most heavily populated nations on the planet — criticised affluent Western states for not doing more to close the growing gap between rich and poor. "This is the moment to meet and act... for the first time in history every country shares a set of concerns about poverty, jobs and social disintegration," U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali told the assembled leaders in the conference hall. "Never before have so many world leaders come together for such a purpose."

The summit, attacked by many aid groups as little more than an expensive jammer, will approve an action plan on Sunday that commits governments to eradicating poverty by working together in a new spirit of post-cold war cooperation. The plan encourages better use of development aid and recognises the need for debt relief. But it includes no binding commitments and is seen as a starting point for action. Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, hosting the summit, told the assembled leaders they were "living in a world of unacceptable contradictions" and urged rich countries to start acting by giving developing nations greater debt relief. "Let us transform hopes into action, to the benefit of billions of people. Let us give all the people of the earth a decent life. We have the tools, let us use them," he said. There are an estimated 1.3 billion people living in poverty around the world, most of them in Africa, parts of Asia and Latin America. They lack everything, from clean water to basic education and medical facilities. Austria announced it would write off around \$100

million of debt to developing countries, following a similar pledge from Denmark earlier this week. Nevertheless, leaders of the world's poorer nations called for stronger global action. "Islands of affluence cannot be sustained in a sea of deprivation. The rich amongst us are preoccupied with limited national agendas," declared Pakistan President Farooq Leghari. Indonesian President Suharto, whose country chairs the 111-nation Non-Aligned Movement, said the summit was a unique chance to build the new world order so often talked about. "In this we cannot afford to fail, for what is at stake is how our children and their children are to live," he said. Chinese Premier Li Peng said the world's wealthy had grown rich at the expense of the poor and warned that a crisis in the developing world would have wider effects. "If it is left unattended, the rich countries will suffer too," he said. Indian Prime Minister P.V.

Narasimha Rao said it was wrong to focus too much on "untrammeled" Western-style market forces as the way to solve problems. "It is only now, at the fog (tail) end of the century, that the leaders of the world have begun to think of how to live, rather than how to kill or escape killing," he said. The two-day summit gathering, following a week of sometimes heated negotiations on how to word the 90-page final declaration, is costing more than \$30 million to stage. Notable absentees are U.S. President Bill Clinton, Russian President Boris Yeltsin and British Prime Minister John Major. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat too busy with Middle East peace problems, cancelled plans to come. Cuban President Fidel Castro, who will address the summit on Sunday, told Danish television in an interview that market economics could not fulfil the aims of the U.N. summit. (Continued on page 7)

Arafat seeks Cairo's help to advance peace process

CAIRO (Agencies) — Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat held talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak here Saturday on Palestinian attempts to push forward autonomy negotiations with Israel. Mr. Arafat left Cairo for the Gaza Strip at the end of the 90-minute talks without making any statement to the press. Egypt's Information Minister Safwat Al Sharif said, however, that the Palestinian leader and Mr. Mubarak "discussed contacts underway to lift obstacles which exist on the Israeli-Palestinian track as well as obstacles linked to the closure imposed by Israel" of the West Bank and Gaza. Mr. Arafat briefed Mr. Mubarak on the outcome of talks with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Mr. Sharif said. The two men also "re-

viewed the situation in the light of the results of the meeting between Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres," he added. Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres met Thursday set a July 1 target date for an end to negotiations on the second stage of Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank, which involves self-rule elections and an Israeli army redeployment outside Palestinian towns. Mr. Peres also announced confidence-building measures, such as increasing permits for Palestinian workers in Israel. The Jewish state sealed off the Palestinian territories on Jan. 22 following a suicide bombing which killed 21 Israelis. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said earlier he hoped the Arafat-Peres talks "reached an agreement on concrete issues and were not just hot air, without any foundation, which will not achieve any progress."

After one-to-one talks Mr. Arafat and Mr. Mubarak were joined by Mr. Sharif, as well as Mr. Mubarak's political advisor Osama Al Baz and chief Palestinian autonomy negotiator Nabil Shaath. Mr. Arafat earlier stressed the importance of Egypt's role in the peace process, "especially in major unfinished issues such as (the Israeli army) redeployment and elections." A PLO official in Cairo said that Israel and the PLO would resume talks there on Tuesday in a fresh bid to set a date for the long-delayed Palestinian elections. Before leaving Gaza for Egypt, Mr. Arafat mentioned the troop withdrawal and Palestinian elections, then added: "We didn't reach an interim agreement on these two issues." Mr. Arafat's spokesman, Nabil Abu Radda, said the PLO leader also told Mr. Mubarak that only limited progress had been made. "The Israelis tried to say

S. Lebanon ports come to life

SIDON, Lebanon (Agencies) — Lebanese fishermen ventured out into the open sea along Lebanon's coast for the first time in a month on Saturday, a day after Israel lifted a partial blockade following U.S. mediation. A girl and three young brothers were wounded when Israeli troops bombed villages suspected of harboring guerrillas in South Lebanon, police said. The shelling underlined tensions on the last active Arab-Israeli war front as U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher strove to revive the sagging peace process in his current Middle East swing. A police statement in Rashaya did not specify what provoked the Israeli bombardment on five villages facing the eastern shore of an enclave Israel occupies in South Lebanon. It said the targets, where anti-Israel resistance fighters are believed to have bases, were blasted by bowitzer and tank cannon fire around midday. The statement identified the girl as Samira Sharaf, 14, and three brothers from the Sobob family. It did not give their ages. The new casualties brought the overall toll in South Lebanon violence this year to 41 killed and 83 wounded. Mr. Christopher, who has already visited Egypt and Israel, was expected to raise the issue of South Lebanon in his talks with Syrian leaders Sunday. Security sources said 1,800 impoverished fishermen resumed their normal activities at dawn after being forbidden since Feb. 8 by Israeli gunboats from sailing more than one kilometre from the coast or risk being fired at. Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri said on Friday Israel had lifted its month-old sea blockade off South Lebanon and thanked Mr. Christopher for his role in baving it lifted. "We ventured out this morning without facing any trouble from the Israeli boats which were visible to us but were very far from the coast," fisherman Mahmoud Bajwi told Reuters. "Thank God it's over. We went back to fishing as usual far from the Israeli boats... and can feed our kids now," said Ahmad Sanbal, 45, a father of five. Israeli gunboats slapped the blockade against fishing boats, but not commercial ships.

Nasser reelected president of JBA

By Amy Henderson
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Kamal Nasser was reelected president of the Jordanian Bar Association (JBA) in the early morning hours Saturday. Mr. Nasser, an opponent of "normalisation" with Israel and a pan-Arab nationalist, won in a second round of voting with only 112 votes over noted pro-government candidate Khalaf Massadeb. Following Mr. Nasser into the JBA's new leadership are the following council members: Ahmad Abu Samen, Saleh Armouti, and Ziad Khalifeh (from the Islamic bloc); Samir Kherfan and Zian Khasawneh (independent candidates); and Ali Dhmour, Saheer Karzone, Mazen Irshadat, and Zuhdi Dassi (National Unity bloc candidates).

The government, however, still has the option to dissolve the president and newly elected council since the JBA acted in defiance of Minister of Justice Fihham Al Tal's eleventh-hour instruction to the JBA last week. On Tuesday, Mr. Tal demanded that all West Bank members of the association be dropped from the roster and not allowed to vote in the elections. Their participation in the elections, he said, would be considered illegal and contrary to Jordanian national policy and sovereignty because Jordan disengaged itself from the West Bank in 1988. The directive caused a furor within the JBA — which opposes Jordan's October peace treaty with Israel. The association said it would refuse to comply with the minister's instructions, claiming that the government was trying to stifle its anti-normalisation voice. Mr. Nasser called the decision an "interference in the bar association's internal affairs."

Despite the uproar, voting commenced Friday as scheduled and proceeded uninterrupted until early morning Saturday. At least 150 West Bank lawyers participated in the first round of elections. Many of the representatives refused to validate their ballots in order to implement the minister's decision. (Ministry of Justice representatives have to validate all ballots according to JBA by-laws). However, the JBA did include West Bank ballots in the tallies on Saturday. By press time Saturday, Mr. Tal could not be reached for comment on the results and procedures of the elections. However, he reiterated several times during the course of last week that the

Kamal Nasser ministry's decision would be implemented. During elections on Friday, the minister said that he "had no idea" if he would ask the Higher Court of Justice for the new council's dissolution. "It all depends on how the procedures go," he told the Jordan Times during election proceedings. According to JBA by-laws, the minister of justice or any group of lawyers can ask the higher court to review any elections results they find to be illegal. If the higher court concurs, the council can be dissolved. There is concern among most members of the bar association that the minister will move to have the council dissolved. Some lawyers at the Professional Associations Complex on Saturday also expressed concern that defeated candidate Massadeb may also do the same. Mr. (Continued on page 7)

Charles in Egypt for 'dialogue with Islam'

CAIRO (AFP) — Prince Charles on Saturday began a four-day visit to Egypt during which he will meet with Muslim religious leaders for talks on holding a "dialogue with Islam," his press secretary said. The prince was met at Cairo airport by Britain's Ambassador here Christopher Long and an Egyptian diplomatic corps official. He was to dine with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The Prince will be "pursuing his long-standing interest in Islam and will be talking with Muslim and Christian leaders about the dialogue between Islam and the West," his press secretary, Sandy Henney, said. The prince is to meet with the highest Sunni Muslim authority, Sheikh Gad Al Haq Ali Gad Al Haq of Al Azhar, as well as the grand mufti of Egypt, Mohammad Sayed Tantawi, and Coptic Orthodox Pope Shenouda III. The Sheikh of Al Azhar is regarded as the highest authority in Sunni Islam, while the mufti is the most authoritative source of opinions on religious issues in Egypt. Speaking to the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in October 1993, Prince Charles said that "the degree of misunderstanding between the Islamic and Western worlds remains dangerously high."



PRINCESS MEETS OAKLEY: Her Royal Highness Princess Basma on Saturday holds talks with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Refugees and Population Phyllis Oakley (centre) in a meeting attended by U.S. Ambassador Wesley Egan. Prince Hassan stressed the importance of supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to enable it to carry out its duty towards Palestinian refugees. He said UNRWA's continued services to refugees in Jordan are of paramount importance to the peace process in the Middle East (Petra photo)

Princess Basma urges Arab action in human development

COPENHAGEN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma on Saturday called on Arab countries to prepare a human development strategies and to make them part of their national development plans. At a meeting of U.N. human resources development ambassadors with representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) participating in the U.N. Summit on World Development convened in the Danish capital, Princess Basma called for the creation of an Arab regional development fund to prepare studies and do research and prepare practical development programmes. The Princess, in an address at the outset of the meeting, stressed the importance of exchanging expertise among Arab countries on the one hand and the developing and advanced countries on the other. She said women were the biggest victims of poverty in the world and that strategies to fight poverty ignore women. She noted that 70 per cent of the world's women suffer from poverty. Princess Basma reviewed Jordan's experience in fighting poverty and improving women's conditions. She outlined the role of the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development's (QAF) role in developing the local society and supporting programmes aiming at encouraging individuals to achieve self-reliance. She also dwelt on the role of the National Commission on women's affairs at the level of preparing the national strategy on women and activating it in legislative, economic, social, political

and educational fields. Earlier Saturday, Princess Basma addressed a press conference in which three U.N. ambassadors participated. "Women constitute only 22 per cent of the labour force in Arab countries compared to 50 per cent in the developing world as a whole and this is a pretty low percentage," Princess Basma said. "Only 17 per cent of working women are in administrative and managerial positions," she added. "Obviously the role of NGOs as in other parts of the world is gaining a greater sense of importance than ever because development needs the popular participation which NGOs offer. NGOs offer the best vehicle for translating the message and needs of people," she said.

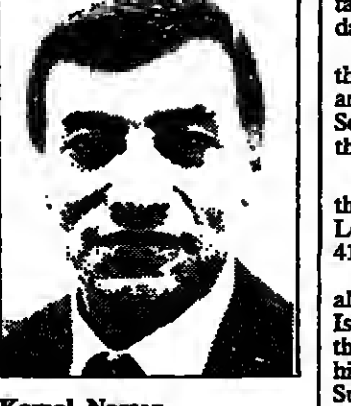
Saud visits Syria ahead of Christopher

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — Saudi Arabia's foreign minister paid an unexpected three-hour visit to Damascus amid U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's latest efforts to revitalise Syrian-Israeli peace talks. On arrival, Prince Saud Al Faisal beaded straight into a meeting with President Hafez Al Assad after telling state-run news media he was carrying a message from King Fahd. At the talks' end, a presidential spokesman said the Saudi prince and Mr. Assad discussed current Arab and regional issues and the latest developments in the Middle East peace process. He did not elaborate. The official Syrian Arab News Agency said Prince Saud carried a reply from Mr. Assad to King Fahd, but did not disclose its contents. The prince flew home after the talks. Mr. Christopher began a Middle East shuttle on Wednesday. His main objective was to lure the Syrians back to the negotiating table a year after they abandoned the talks in protest over the lack of progress. The secretary of state was in Israel Saturday. He already has visited Egypt and met in Gaza with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. On Sunday, Mr. Christopher flies to Saudi Arabia, and from there to Syria and Jordan. In his talks with the Israelis, Mr. Christopher stressed the need to resume the Israeli-Syrian peace talks. But it was not clear whether he has developed any new ideas to break the logjam. Meanwhile, the Syrians reportedly are worried that Israel, which already has signed peace accords with Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians, would strike new separate deals with other Arab countries and isolate Damascus. Washington has been pressuring its allies in the

oil-rich Gulf to make some gestures toward normalising relations with Israel to help promote regional peace. But these countries, which are led by Saudi Arabia, remain reluctant to do so while the Syrian-Israeli talks are deadlocked over the Jewish state's refusal to commit itself to a total withdrawal from the Golan Heights which it occupied in 1967 and "annexed" 14 years later. Syrian media meanwhile accused the United States of failing the Arabs in its role as a co-sponsor of the peace process. The official daily Al Thawra said: "The United States has still not fulfilled its role as an impartial and honest partner since it completely backs Israel which wants to win land and peace without giving anything to the Arabs." "It is clear that the United States is not a partner of the Arabs."

Ministers review claims for Gulf war damages

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Interior Salameh Hamad, Awwaf and Islamic Affairs Minister Abdul Salam Al Abbadi and Labour Minister Nader Abul Shaar on Saturday held a meeting at the Gulf returnees' compensation follow-up centre at the premises of the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Committee. Mr. Hamad said the aim of the meeting was to discuss compensation for returnees and future plans to follow up on the issue. According to Dr. Abul Shaar, the meeting also discussed the issue of incomplete claims for compensations filed by returnees. He voiced hope that all applications forms would be completely filled so as to be sent to the Geneva-based special United Nations committee in charge of following up the issue as soon as possible. The secretary general of the centre, Yahya Al Uteibi, said the centre, established upon directives by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan in July 1993, has paid the first instalment of claims of the B category. This totalled 241 claims worth \$982,500 which were given to applicants. B category claims total 893. C category claims total 42,370. D category claims total 1,315 and A category 65,234. The total estimate for these claims stands at \$3.5 billion. The Geneva-based compensation fund recently announced that it will approve 19,000 claims in the A category on March 20, but the payment of compensations for these claims will depend on funds availability.



Kamal Nasser ministry's decision would be implemented. During elections on Friday, the minister said that he "had no idea" if he would ask the Higher Court of Justice for the new council's dissolution. "It all depends on how the procedures go," he told the Jordan Times during election proceedings. According to JBA by-laws, the minister of justice or any group of lawyers can ask the higher court to review any elections results they find to be illegal. If the higher court concurs, the council can be dissolved. There is concern among most members of the bar association that the minister will move to have the council dissolved. Some lawyers at the Professional Associations Complex on Saturday also expressed concern that defeated candidate Massadeb may also do the same. Mr. (Continued on page 7)

Russia, Oman interested in Caspian pipeline

They will also visit the American Financial Market

Most of the members of the delegation are based in the United States. Others are based in the Middle East acting on behalf of American clients.

The delegation will leave Jordan for the Palestinian self-rule enclave of Jericho on Wednesday.

RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

Tim Al Nafes Hospital	(07)1477111	19:35	Vienna (RJ)
AQABA:		20:15	Rome (RJ)
Princess Hayn Hospital	(03)3141111	20:20	Madrid (RJ)
		00:15	Aqaba (RJ)

BONN (AP) — The German government announced Friday that it had agreed to extradite Kurdish criminal suspects under terms it said would ensure they are not tortured or otherwise abused in Turkey. It did not say when it would begin extraditions. Nor did it say how many or which militant Kurdish separatists would be returned to Turkey. The agreement follows talks between interior ministers Manfred Kanther of Germany and Nabit Metense of Turkey. It applies to members of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), which the Bonn government banned in late 1993. The interior ministry made the announcement in a statement Friday evening. It said Turkish authorities have agreed to let Bonn know whether a candidate for extradition faces criminal proceedings and what the consequences could be, especially if the death penalty is involved.

06:28	.....	Cairo (RU)	21:00	.....	Cairo (MS)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)			02:28	.....	Amsterdam (KL)
12:35	.....	Mekkah (GF)	HIJAZ RAILWAY		
20:28	.....	Cairo (MS)	TRAIN		
20:28	.....	Beirut (ME)	Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday		
22:55	.....	Istanbul (TK)	Dep. Amman 5:50 p.m. every Monday		
01:10	.....	Amsterdam (KL)	Dep. Damascus 7:00 a.m. every Sunday		
			Arr. Amman 5:50 p.m. every Sunday		
DEPARTURES					
Royal Jordanian (RJ)					
Flights					
(Terminal 1)					
06:25	.....	Aqaba (RU)	Uppeftower price in f/s per kg.		
08:30	.....	Beirut (RU)	Apple 700/500		
08:30	.....	Frankfurt (RU)	Banana 680/400		
10:55	.....	Vienna (RU)	Banana (Mukannam) 680/400		
11:15	.....	New York (RU)	Cabbage 120/140		
11:30	.....	Rome (RU)	Carrot 170/80		
11:30	.....	Tunis (RU)	Cardiflow 1650/100		
11:45	.....	Casablanca (RU)	Cucumbers (small) 90/140		
11:55	.....	Athens (RU)	Cucumbers (large) 200/110		
20:00	.....	Dhahran (RU)	Eggplant 140/80		
20:15	.....	Cairo (RU)	Garic 1200/800		
20:30	.....	Jeddah (RU)	Green beans 280/1100		
20:45	.....	New Delhi (RU)	Lemon 350/240		
21:05	.....	Aqaba (RU)	Marrow (large) 90/140		
21:25	.....	Alin Dhabl (RU)	Marrow (small) 130/70		
21:45	.....	Dhahran (RU)	Onion (green) 260/180		
22:40	.....	Aqaba (RU)	Onion (dry) 380/250		
22:45	.....	Singapore, Jakarta (RU)	Orange 440/250		
22:45	.....	Bangkok (RU)	Potato 700/400		
22:45	.....	Sanaa (RU)	Pepper (hot) 380/280		
			Pepper (sweet) 380/280		
			Potato 330/220		
			Radish 120/80		
			Spinach 100/50		
			Sprng Beans 650/400		
			Tomato 170/80		
Other Flights (Terminal 2)					
07:25	.....	Rome (AZ)			
07:45	.....	Beirut (ME)			
13:30	.....	Doha, Muscat (GF)			

Voting begins in Bihar; 13 die as 3 Indian states count votes

NEW DELHI (Agencies) — Thirteen people were killed in election-related violence as three Indian states with 100 million voters began counting ballots that could help determine the fate of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's government.

A magistrate and his driver were killed when a bomb exploded as violence-marred assembly elections began in the eastern state of Bihar.

They were killed immediately and a policeman was injured when the bomb went off in a small village, local agencies reported. Authorities accused extremists who have boycotted the assembly elections.

On Friday, five people assembling a bomb were killed when the device went off in a remote village in Bihar.

Elsewhere in the state, activists from rival political parties exchanged gunfire and threw bombs at each other Saturday in the town of Gaya. Armed men ransacked four voting booths in the village of Makhampur, authorities said.

Six people were killed in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh Friday, including three who died when a bomb exploded in a house in a small village. The state held the second and final phase of local, or Panchayat Raj, elec-

tions Friday.

Dozens of people have been killed in violence linked to elections in seven states, including more than 40 in Bihar in recent weeks.

Last month Mr. Rao's Congress Party won elections to keep a fragile grip on power in the small northeastern state of Manipur, the only state among six holding assembly polls which has announced the results.

State elections have no direct impact on the composition of parliament in the federal capital New Delhi.

But Mr. Rao's authority was shaken when Congress suffered defeat in three of four states that held assembly elections late last year, including his home state of Andhra Pradesh.

Following the reversals, Congress dissident Arjun Singh, one of Mr. Rao's main rivals, quit the cabinet in protest and accused the prime minister of ignoring the poor and minority Muslim, seen as traditional Congress supporters.

Mr. Singh has since been touring the country, rallying party rebels.

In the latest round of polls, Congress faced an uphill battle in several states.

But the party's expectations have been so reduced that Mr. Rao could emerge

with only bruises from the last major set of state polls before general elections next year.

Congress was expected to retain power in the small northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which held its assembly polls Saturday.

Vote counting began Saturday in three of the biggest states which together have more than 100 million voters — Gujarat, Orissa and Maharashtra, India's richest state.

All three states voted either last month or earlier in March but held off counting until Saturday. A trend in results was expected to emerge later in the day but the final tally would not come before Sunday, officials said.

In Bombay, the capital of Maharashtra and India's financial hub, police stood guard outside each of the city's 34 counting centres, shooting away bystanders.

Nearly 20,000 police and paramilitary forces were deployed to maintain order in the state, authorities said.

Business leaders said Saturday, the Indian government will pursue free-market reforms initiated in 1991 even if the ruling Congress (I) Party suffers defeat in crucial state elections.

Businessmen and financial analysts sought to allay fears



Baboo Singh (left), an opposition candidate to Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's Congress (I) Party, campaigns with his election symbol, a table fan, in the capital of the eastern state of Bihar (AFP photo)

Lone gunman kills minister in Burundi

BUJUMBURA (R) — A lone gunman killed the energy and mines minister of ethnically-explosive Burundi Saturday, witnesses said.

The minister, Ernest Kabushemeye, was killed in the capital Bujumbura. "He was shot dead and his bodyguard was injured," said a diplomatic source.

The minister's bloodied corpse was left lying in his car as police cordoned off streets around the scene of the attack between the French and U.S. cultural centres in the heart of the city.

Mr. Kabushemeye, a Hutu, was a prominent leader in the governing coalition of the majority Hutu-led government.

United Nations special en-

voy to Burundi, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, condemned the killing.

"My first reaction of course is one of sadness. I knew this minister and pity his family," Mr. Ould Abdallah told Reuters.

"I sympathise with the prime minister who doesn't need this violence in broad daylight in the capital."

The new prime minister, Antoine Nduwayo, appointed after protracted wrangling between Hutu and Tutsi-led parties only filled his last ministerial vacancy Monday before chairing a first cabinet meeting.

The motives for Mr. Kabushemeye's killing was unknown, and officials said an investigation into the

attack had already been launched.

Hutu President Sylvestre Ndayishimiye fled out of Bujumbura Friday to attend the U.N. poverty summit in Copenhagen.

The streets remained calm immediately after the killing but Burundi has been battered by ethnic violence between Hutus and Tutsis since its first popularly-elected President Melchior Ndadaye was murdered in October 1993.

Ten Hutu gunmen were killed in an attack on paramilitary police in Cibitoke province, bordering Zaire and Rwanda in the northwest of the Central African country, Wednesday, the army said.

Bangladesh delays Nasreen trial again

DHAKA (AFP) — The blasphemy trial of writer Taslima Nasreen was given a new delay Saturday, this time by 35 days after the prosecution said it has not yet received government approval to proceed.

Magistrate A.K.M. Kamaluddin reset the hearing for April 15, the sixth postponement since charges were filed in November 1993 against the writer, now in exile in Sweden.

Public Prosecutor Abdur Razzaque Khan said only

that "procedural tangles" had held up government approval.

In early January, a two-member High Court bench rejected a request by Nasreen's lawyer that her trial in absentia for blaspheming Islam be dismissed.

But the judges ordered the magistrate to halt action until the prosecutors got formal approval for the trial from the Home Ministry.

The magistrate Saturday

Angolan rebels agree to withdraw troops

LUANDA, Angola (AP) — UNITA rebels have agreed to withdraw their troops from a volatile northern region, ending a three-week impasse that was stalling a peace deal for this African nation, the U.N. representative said Thursday.

Alouine Blondin Beye told reporters, rebel chief Jonas Savimbi had assured him Wednesday at a meeting in central Angola that UNITA troops were withdrawing from the northern City of Uige to nearby Negle, ending weeks of contention and concerns that the peace deal signed last November was about to go off the rails.

Mr. Beye quoted Mr. Savimbi as saying withdrawal began on March 6 but gave no confirmation that U.N. observers had confirmed that. He said Mr. Savimbi had accepted "without condition" a disengagement plan penned by government.

The Malian also said Mr. Savimbi had pledged U.N. military observers access to rebel-controlled areas and had agreed to a demining plan that should clear the way for a 7,000-strong U.N. peacekeeping force to cement peace after 19 years of civil war.

Speaking to reporters after meeting with a joint commission of UNITA, government and U.N. military officials and U.S., Portuguese and Russian diplomats, Mr. Beye said that 468 of the 533 military observers slated for duty in Angola had already arrived.

Winnie Mandela and Mbeki meet

PRETORIA (AFP) — Winnie Mandela, estranged wife of Nelson Mandela, held talks with Deputy President Thabo Mbeki lasting into the early hours of Saturday over her controversial West African trip, the SABA news agency said.

Mrs. Mandela, whose post as deputy minister of arts, culture, science and technology is reportedly on the line, enlivened President Mandela when she embarked on the trip after he expressly ordered her to stay home and attend an important meeting

of his African National Congress (ANC).

She returned to South Africa five days early last Thursday after police claimed she had used her government position to award a low-income housing contract to a firm in exchange for financial gain.

SABA said the one-on-one meeting, at Mr. Mbeki's office here, lasted two-and-a-half hours.

Mrs. Mandela dodged reporters by leaving by a back entrance, while Mr. Mbeki declined to speak to the media.

His spokesman, Thami Ntseane, said he was not informed of the content of the discussions but said Mr. Mbeki had been "calm and relaxed."

"This is not a personal matter, it is a political one," he said.

Before the meeting, another spokesman for Mr. Mbeki, Ricky Naidoo, said the two would only discuss the West African trip and not the kickback allegations as the deputy president "is not prepared to intervene in a police investigation."

Belarus force reduction suspension worries West

VIENNA (AFP) — A decision by Belarus to stop destroying armaments in defiance of its obligations under the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty has worried other treaty partners, a Western diplomat said here.

Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko said that Minsk could no longer afford financially to scrap the tanks, combat aircraft and other weapons it is supposed to under the 1990 treaty.

Mr. Lukashenko, quoted by the Russian Interfax News Agency, called for an international fund to be set up to assist, saying he had discussed the problem with European Union leaders in Brussels last weekend.

But the Belarus president also said that his country, "one of the most peaceful in Europe," was anxious about having a common border with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) once other eastern European countries join that alliance.

However Foreign Minister Vladimir Senko insisted later that the decision was purely financial, and did not mean Minsk was pulling out of the treaty. He said that Belarus, the former Soviet republic of Belorussia, was "saturated with arms."

A Western diplomat in Vienna, from where the rep-

Helms: Aristide creating Cuba-style system

WASHINGTON (AP) — The chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee asserted Thursday that President Jean-Bertrand Aristide has established Cuban-style "vigilance committees" to keep watch on political opponents.

Senator Jesse Helms, a conservative Republican and longtime Aristide critic, questioned whether the U.S. military intervention in Haiti was worth the cost, which he projected at \$1.8 billion. The Clinton administration estimates \$1.5 billion. "I don't know of any democratic values that Aristide has ever demonstrated," Sen. Helms said.

Administration witnesses at a committee hearing didn't respond directly to Sen. Helms' charges that "vigilance committees" are enforcing Aristide's rule. As described by Sen. Helms, the groups recall the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution in Cuba, which Fidel Castro established in 1960 as his regime's principal instrument of surveillance.

But Strobe Talbott, the State Department's second-ranking official as deputy secretary of state, defended Mr. Aristide's democratic credentials. He said the Haitian leader is arranging for legislative and municipal elections in June and for presidential elections in December.

In addition, he said, Mr. Aristide has "nine or 10" political parties represented in his cabinet as part of a reconciliation policy.

"He's come under some criticism from his traditional supporters for reaching out to all elements of Haitian society and all across the political spectrum," Mr. Talbott said.

Sen. Helms alleged that aid to Haiti eats up 15 per cent of the State Department's assistance budget for the Western hemisphere even though only one-tenth of 1 per cent of the hemisphere's population is Haitian.

He also said Mr. Aristide has replaced half the country's elected mayors with his own supporters.

Nominee for CIA chief withdraws

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Michael Carns, the retired U.S. Air Force general nominated to head the CIA, has asked President Bill Clinton to withdraw his name from consideration, administration officials said Friday.

Mr. Clinton was expected to name Deputy Secretary of Defence John Deutch to head the espionage agency.

Gen. Carns asked that his nomination be withdrawn because of a dispute over a former household employee, an administration official said.

The official said Mr. Clinton was expected to announce Saturday that he would honour Gen. Carns' request, and name Mr. Deutch, who had previously been under consideration for the position.

Mr. Clinton spoke with Gen. Carns by telephone Friday night, the White House said, adding that the administration would have more to say on the matter Saturday.

"We are evaluating the sta-

tus of the nomination based on information developed in the course of the FBI investigation of General Carns," White House spokesman Michael McCurry said.

A Vietnam veteran, the 57-year-old Carns served as vice chief of staff of the air force until his retirement last year. He played a leading role in directing the air war against Iraq during the 1990-91 Gulf War.

The previous Central Intelligence Agency director, James Woolsey, abruptly resigned in December after two stormy years in the post.

The troubled leadership transition comes amid calls for reform of the CIA in the wake of the arrest a year ago of Aldrich Ames, a career CIA agent who spied for Moscow since 1985.

Earlier Friday, the White House confirmed that Mr. Clinton had signed a confidential order that sets priorities for U.S. intelligence in its efforts to counter threats posed by the post-cold war era.

A commission has been set up to oversee intelligence gathering but its mandate is separate from another working group set up to examine the mandate of the CIA and other intelligence agencies.

White House spokesman Michael McCurry did not give details on the priority list but noted that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and international crime were among the targeted threats.

He said the list was "to reflect the new threats that are more urgent in the post-cold war world."

"There are certain types of threats that are now reduced, specifically the nuclear threat," Mr. McCurry said.

"It's important in a time of limited resources for the president and his policymakers to give clear priorities to the intelligence community so that they can gather the type of information that will help them make the right decisions," Mr. McCurry said.

WINCHESTER, England (AP) — Winchester Cathedral, you let her down. Emily Edmondstone, 11, wants to join the 22 boys in the centuries-old choir at the famed 900-year-old cathedral in southern England, but has been barred from auditions because she's a girl. Her mother, Jocelyn, said Friday that she was considering a legal appeal based on British laws against sex discrimination.

"My daughter is an all round musical child just like the boy choristers," she told Britain's Press Association. The dean of Winchester Cathedral, the very Reverend Trevor Beeson, a staunch supporter of women priests in the Anglican Church, said the problem was not Emily's sex. It was that the choir was run by a local boy's boarding school.

"There is a possibility of having a girls' choir drawing from day schools in the city but we can't pursue that now because it costs time and money neither of which we have," Fr. Beeson said. That wasn't good enough for Emily, who was circulating a petition. "I just want to be given a chance," she said. "I think it is unfair girls are not given the same opportunity to sing."

Premier: Quebec will vote on independence this year

MONTREAL (AP) — An independence referendum will be held this year as promised, and Quebec voters will be asked to approve total separation from Canada rather than a political association, Premier Jacques Parizeau said Thursday.

Mr. Parizeau's Parti Quebecois was elected last year on a platform to take the French-speaking province out of Canada, but opinion polls consistently show support for independence falls short of a majority.

There has been widespread speculation recently that Mr. Parizeau would postpone the referendum or devise a diluted question on sovereignty that he would be sure to win.

"I feel very much convinced, maybe even more so, that (the) referendum must take place in 1995," Mr. Parizeau said Thursday after returning from a 10-day vacation in Mexico.

"The question will be clear and simple and the question will be a winning one," he said.

Mr. Parizeau said that while the referendum question would not refer to a political association with the rest of Canada, he has not ruled out the possibility of an economic association.

"I don't have a closed mind on this," he said.

A referendum on "sovereignty-association" with Canada was defeated in 1980, partly because the question was awkwardly worded, and many people felt it was a referendum on "sovereignty-association" with Canada.

Many French Canadians feel like second-class citizens in their own country, with its English-speaking majority, and feel that independence is the only way to preserve their language and culture.

North-South confrontation over rights worries West

GENEVA (AFP) — Renewed North-South confrontation over human rights replacing the East-West tension of the cold war caused alarm among Europeans in the just-ended 51st session of the U.N. Human Rights Commission.

The session was also marked by an unprecedented criticism of three of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

Moscow went along with a statement condemning the brutality of its intervention in the rebel Republic of Chechnya, Washington did not oppose a resolution being unsuccessfully put by Cuba on the persistence of racism in the United States, and Beijing for once failed to prevent itself being dragged into the limelight.

But German delegation head Gerhard Baum voiced the prevalent concern at the growing opposition between Western democracies and countries of the Third World, of which several important states were singled out for criticism.

"We are aware of mount-

ing mistrust in developing countries of the real intentions of the West," he said.

He told journalists that some states like India, and especially Cuba, had tried to hamper the work of the commission by raising a plethora of procedural points.

Curbs on individual freedoms were being excused by the plea for the right to national development, Mr. Baum said. But he noted that the 1993 Vienna human rights summit had expected this right, while ruling that other human rights, such as a fair trial and freedom from torture or summary execution, were universal principles regardless of culture.

Mr. Baum said European states should acknowledge their own faults and encourage dialogue. "We should be more critical of ourselves, explain that we are not judges and admit that we have our own problems such as racism."

In one such example, the commission's rapporteur on summary executions, Bacre Waly Ndiaye of Senegal, had complained that he had been denied access to prisons in the United States where teen-

age killers were being kept on death row to be executed once they reached the age of majority.

The various blocs grouping the 53 members of the commission became evident during the debates, with the principle one being the European Union, which generally attracted support from the United States, Eastern Europe and Latin America.

China called for "Third World solidarity in its first unsuccessful attempt since 1990 to prevent a vote on a critical motion brought by Western nations and Japan, and saw the resolution fail by one vote.

Chinese ambassador Jin Yingshan accused Europeans and Americans of trying to stop China's economic development and dismember the country.

African countries, claiming that Nigeria's national unity was at stake, were prominent in bringing down a French resolution criticising the military government in Abuja for executions, arbitrary arrests and curbs on trade unions and the press.

Commission Chairman Musa Bin Hitan of Malaysia

commented at a press conference Friday: "I'm not prepared to say there is a rigid North-South divide, but there is always an undercurrent of differences."

He said it was good that no country, even a permanent member of the Security Council, should be above the law.

"Human rights have become the focus of attention of the world," Mr. Bin Hitan said, adding, "this is the best thing that has happened to the international community."

According to Mr. Bin Hitan, "the Commission on Human Rights has become, after the Security Council, the most 'political' organisation of the U.N. Human Rights are fashionable."

But he warned, "We are suffering from our popularity... the Commission could soon be buried alive" under the weight of its bureaucracy.

Mr. Bin Hitan noted that this year's three month session had seen 117 resolutions or decisions adopted, and more than 8,000 pages of documents printed and translated in each of the five working languages.

Girl grows into 'giant' on beancurd, noodles

SHANGHAI (AFP) — A 13-year-old girl in China's Henan province has shocked her parents by growing to a height of 1.98 metres (six feet, six inches) and weighing in at 120 kilograms (264 pounds), a report said.

Zhang Xilian's stature has gained her the reputation of being a local "giant" after growing to her size on a steady diet of beancurd and noodles, the Liberation Daily said. A doctor at a Shanghai hospital said the average height for a girl of Zhang's age was 1.4 metres (four feet, seven inches). According to the report, Zhang would consume 3.5 kilograms (7.7 pounds) at each meal, adding that she was "fond" of starchy foods. When she was three years old, she had already reached the height of 1.20 metres (three feet, 11 inches), it said.

World's largest record store opens in Tokyo

TOKYO (R) — Hundreds of Japanese music lovers queued in the rain as the world's largest record store opened in Tokyo. At 5,000 sq metre (50,000 sq feet), Tower Records' new branch in the Shibuya entertainment district is nearly half as big again as the previous biggest, an HMV store in London's Oxford Street, according to the Guinness Book of Records. Like other foreign record stores in Japan, Tower has taken advantage of the high yen, only 91 were needed to buy a dollar on Friday, to import cheap compact discs, mainly from the United States. It sells these for several hundred yen (several dollars) less than domestically produced CDs. However, top 40 albums, advertised as special bargains, still cost 1,790 yen, the equivalent of \$19.70. "Overall, our strong points in the market are the environment we create for people shopping for music and our prices," said Keith Cahoon, Tower's managing-director for the Far East. "Maybe the number-one strong point is our selection." Tower has half a million items on sale in the nine-storey store, including imported books and magazines.

China opens 1st school for love

BEIJING (R) — China's first school offering courses which discuss sex and love ethics and give advice to the jilted has opened in Beijing, state media said Saturday. "Love is an art. It involves certain skills, and especially communicative skills," the official China Daily quoted Xia Xiaoming, associate professor of sociology at Beijing Technical University, as saying. The school, which opened Friday, is the first of a chain that the Beijing Municipal Women's Federation and the Beijing Marriage and Family Research Society plan to set up, Xinhua News Agency said. "We wish the youngsters less pain and regret in their romance," Chen Yiyun, a teacher at the school and a renowned expert on family and marriage.

Cathedral stands and watches as choir bans girl

WINCHESTER, England (AP) — Winchester Cathedral, you let her down. Emily Edmondstone, 11, wants to join the 22 boys in the centuries-old choir at the famed 900-year-old cathedral in southern England, but has been barred from auditions because she's a girl. Her mother, Jocelyn, said Friday that she was considering a legal appeal based on British laws against sex discrimination.

"My daughter is an all round musical child just like the boy choristers," she told Britain's Press Association. The dean of Winchester Cathedral, the very Reverend Trevor Beeson, a staunch supporter of women priests in the Anglican Church, said the problem was not Emily's sex. It was that the choir was run by a local boy's boarding school.

"There is a possibility of having a girls' choir drawing from day schools in the city but we can't pursue that now because it costs time and money neither of which we have," Fr. Beeson said. That wasn't good enough for Emily, who was circulating a petition. "I just want to be given a chance," she said. "I think it is unfair girls are not given the same opportunity to sing."

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World's largest record store opens in Tokyo

TOKYO (R) — A massive Japanese music store, opened in the heart of the city on Tuesday. The store, located in the Shinjuku district, is the largest of its kind in the world. It covers an area of 10,000 square metres and is expected to attract a large number of visitors. The store is owned by a Japanese company and is expected to be a major success.

China opens school for love

BEIJING (R) — A new school for love has opened in Beijing. The school is aimed at helping young people find love and is expected to be a major success. The school is located in the heart of the city and is expected to attract a large number of students. The school is owned by a Chinese company and is expected to be a major success.

Girl grows giant on beancurd noodles

World News



Three agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (left) re-enact the attack on a U.S. consulate van, at the scene of the incident, in the troubled city of Karachi (AFP photo)

Bhutto holds emergency talks on Karachi killings

KARACHI, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistan Saturday effectively blamed India as one of the elements involved in the recent spate of violence to hit this troubled city.

Meanwhile, officials prepared to send the bodies of two slain U.S. government employees home and urged American citizens to increase security precautions.

At a funeral procession for victims of Friday's bomb and gun attack on a Shiite Muslim mosque thousands of wailing mourners condemned the government, burned vehicles and fired automatic weapons.

Chaos ensued and people ran for safety and young children hurled stones at nearby police. There were no immediate reports of injury.

"The forces of sectarianism, ethnicity and narcotics have combined to create terrorism and harassment in the city," Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said after a lengthy meeting with top government officials in Karachi.

Ms. Bhutto and other top officials accused India as one of the groups involved in the terrorism, though they did not mention the country by name.

"There is the foreign hand," in the terrorism, Ms. Bhutto told journalists from the steps of the state guest house, a white colonial structure in downtown Karachi.

"We have caught people who were trained overseas," she said. This was a clear reference to India and In-

formation Secretary Hussein Haqqani said: "I think anybody with any intelligence knows who is setting out to destabilise Pakistan."

He said the terrorist attacks were a reaction to the Muslim secessionist movement in Indian-held Kashmir. India routinely accuses Pakistan of fomenting violence in its troubled state.

"Karachi does not have a sectarian problem. What we have is foreign-trained saboteurs," Mr. Haqqani said.

Friday's mosque attack targeted Pakistan's minority Shiite Muslims. Twelve people were killed and 28 wounded.

At the funeral for those killed hundreds of mourners wailed and chanted "death to Benazir Bhutto."

Gunshots rang out and angry youths set fire to three vehicles parked near the mosque.

Police sharpshooters stood guard on buildings lining the two kilometres (1.2 mile) route between the mosque and the graveyard.

Friday's mosque attack came two days after gunmen killed two U.S. government employees in a hail of bullets as they were stopped at a traffic light at a busy intersection.

There was no evidence linking the bombing to the killing of the two Americans. But both were horrific examples of the surging violence that has convulsed Karachi and threatens to undermine Ms. Bhutto's government.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack, although many people are blaming the militant Sunni Muslim group, known as the Guardians of the Prophet.

At least 1,000 people have been killed in attacks in Karachi in the past year. Most assaults are boldly executed during the day by gunmen who seldom bother to conceal their identities. Arrests are rare.

Ms. Bhutto said Saturday that her government would respond "ruthlessly" if necessary to end the violence that has plagued Karachi.

The government would "respond in a ruthless manner if ruthlessness was required," she said.

Narcotics dealers were also financing sectarian groups and "hiring guns to create fear" and to deflect pressure which her government was applying against them, she said.

Ms. Bhutto said an extradition treaty signed with Egypt to turn over militants had resulted in militant organisations trying to destabilise the situation.

"At the time of the Afghan War, the entire West landed here and helped create holy warriors, whose job it was to go into Afghanistan and fight a holy war (against the Communist government in Kabul backed by the Soviet army) and when that holy war ended (in 1989), the West pack-

Russians give ultimatum on surrender of Chechen towns

SHALI, Russia (AFP) — Russian forces have threatened to storm the three major separatist strongholds in eastern Chechnya if forces loyal to Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev do not surrender by Sunday, Chechen fighters returning from the front said.

They said the ultimatum, issued early Saturday to fighters in Gudermes, concerned Shali, the town Chechen separatists now regard as their capital, Argun and Gudermes.

Shali was eerily silent Saturday, as fighters here awaited the next Russian move.

The three towns — Shali, Gudermes and Argun — have been the prime targets of assault by Russian forces since they completed their encirclement of the capital Grozny in February.

But inside the Chechen command compound here there was little sense of panic.

The commander of Mr. Dudayev's forces, Aslan Maskhadov, said that he had not been informed of the ultimatum through official channels.

"We've heard so many of these ultimatums. We don't pay attention to them," he said, vowing that his forces would "continue to fight as long as we're here, obviously."

But Mr. Maskhadov offered no other explanation for the strange silence that hovered over Shali Saturday morning, where Russian

artillery from the nearby front has been heard for weeks almost without interruption.

The two sides, who have been maintaining contacts to arrange small-scale exchanges of war prisoners, appeared to have lost touch with one another.

Mr. Maskhadov told a group of Russian soldiers' mothers that he had not heard from the Ingush mediators for several days.

Representatives of Ingushetia, a republic which borders on Chechnya to the west, had been travelling back and forth to Shali regularly, exchanging information with both sides.

"We gave them our list of prisoners. Then they disappeared. Until they return there is nothing we can do," Mr. Maskhadov told the mothers.

There are about 10 Russian mothers now living in Shali. Some of them have waited here for several weeks for information about their own sons and about Chechen prisoners held on the Russian side in hopes that a prisoner exchange can be arranged to release their sons.

Mr. Maskhadov, who represented the Chechens at ceasefire talks in mid-February, reaffirmed his position that no meaningful peace talks could take place as long as the Russian side refuses to meet directly with Mr. Dudayev.

But there remain important military matters, such as war prisoners and the ex-

Russian leaders still face problems of perestroika

MOSCOW (R) — Ten years to the day after Mikhail Gorbachev became Soviet Communist Party chief, Kremlin leaders are still struggling with the problems unleashed by his reforms.

Mr. Gorbachev, elected party general secretary by the politburo on March 11, 1985, launched "perestroika" (restructuring) and "glasnost" (openness) policies to reform the Soviet Union.

In power until the end of 1991, he presided over the collapse of the Soviet Union and of the Communist system. Since then, living standards for most Russian citizens have fallen and organised crime has spread into almost every aspect of life.

"So much more bitter was the disappointment because he did not bring about the changes that the majority expected," conservative parliamentarian Sergei Baburin was quoted as saying by ITAR-TASS news agency.

Still seen as a hero in the West, Mr. Gorbachev is regarded by many in Russia as a traitor. Mr. Gorbachev, 64, a frequent critic of President Boris Yeltsin, has indicated

he may run next year's presidential elections.

Saturday's edition of the hardline conservative Soviet newspaper called the day he came to power "fateful in the history of the party and the state."

But the official Rossiyskaya Gazeta said that although some people had begun perestroika as a cosmetic reform, "today's Russian leadership is carrying out reforms which in the second half of the 1980s could only be the subject of theoretical disputes by newspaper columnists."

Mr. Yeltsin pressed ahead with liberalisation, although his reforms would not have been possible without perestroika.

Mr. Gorbachev's vision of a stable economy is still distant, despite International Monetary Fund Managing Director Michel Camdessus's blessing to a \$6.4 billion standby loan.

Moscow has to commit itself to a stiff austerity programme to speed up reform and curb inflation, which remains stubbornly high at 11 per cent in February after 17.8 per cent in January.

"Now is the time to move ahead forcefully to reinforce those gains already made. The higher inflation is, the longer the recovery of production and living standards is postponed," Mr. Camdessus said in Moscow Friday.

Perestroika and especially glasnost permitted unprecedented criticism of the Soviet system and leadership and freedom of speech, something Russia never had before.

As a result of the democratic reforms introduced by Mr. Gorbachev, today's leaders face domestic political turbulence unheard of in Soviet days.

Russia's lower house of parliament voted Friday to dismiss Human Rights Commissioner Sergei Kovalev, a fierce critic of the Chechnya campaign, after conservative deputies accused him of bias and overstepping his mandate.

It also passed non-binding votes of no confidence in Interior Minister Viktor Yerin and Acting Prosecutor

No arms deal with Clinton — Sinn Fein's Adams

DUBLIN (Agencies) — Gerry Adams, president of the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein, denied Saturday that he had struck a deal with President Bill Clinton on IRA arms to win a U.S. visa and the lifting of a fund-raising ban in America.

"There should be no sense of this trip to the United States being any part of behind-the-door deals," Mr. Adams told a news conference before flying to the United States for a 10-day trip that has strained relations between Washington and London.

He was responding to media reports that Mr. Clinton had granted him a visa, lifted a ban on fund-raising and invited him to a White House St Patrick's Day party in exchange for a Sinn Fein commitment to discuss de-commissioning IRA arms.

On Thursday Mr. Adams issued a statement saying his group was willing to discuss with British ministers the taking out of service of Irish Republican Army arms used in the guerrillas' 25-year war against British rule of Northern Ireland.

The Sinn Fein president said Saturday the statement was not issued in response to any bargaining with Mr. Clinton.

"The president did the right thing in order to build confidence in the peace process," Mr. Adams said.

He told reporters that any money he raised in the United States would be used to fund political activities there.

The visit will raise Mr. Adams' international profile at a time when Britain has yet to enter ministerial level talks with Sinn Fein.

London says it has to be satisfied that an IRA ceasefire last September is permanent.

British officials are dismayed at Mr. Clinton's gesture, which also puts London out of step with its Irish partners in a drive to find a lasting political settlement to the Northern Ireland conflict.

Britain's Northern Ireland Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew was fuming Friday about Mr. Clinton's decision to let Mr. Adams tout for funds.

"I think people here will be dismayed that Mr. Adams who, they recall, carried the coffin of somebody who was responsible for the Shankill bombing about 18 months ago, is now being treated like a perfectly ordinary leader of a constitutional party," Sir Patrick said.

Mr. Adams briefly carried the coffin of Irish Republican Army (IRA) bomber Thomas Begley, who died planting a bomb that killed nine other people and injured 59 in a fish and chip shop in the Shankill Road, in the Protestant heartland of Belfast, in October 1993.

Sir Patrick added in an interview with the BBC: "We actually happened to have sustained something like 3,000 murders in the course of the last 25 years of terrorism."

"It concentrates your mind when it's your own country, your own countrymen and women who have suffered such attacks."

Sir Patrick told the BBC Friday that Washington had "made a mistake" in relaxing long-standing conditions imposed on Mr. Adams without any "return" from Sinn Fein which is pushing for a seat at constitutional negotiations on the future of Northern Ireland in the light of the ceasefire declared by the IRA last September.

ICRC plane fired at as tension mounts in Bosnia

SARAJEVO (AFP) — An International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) plane was fired at on landing at Sarajevo Airport Saturday morning and a Bosnian woman interpreter working for the U.N. was seized at gunpoint by the Serbs.

The ICRC twin-engine turbo-prop plane was hit by one round of gunfire, but was able to take off again for Zagreb after which the airport was closed, U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) spokesman Major Pierre Chavany said. The origin of fire was unknown.

Meanwhile, a woman interpreter was seized from a French U.N. armoured vehicle at a Serb checkpoint on the outskirts of Sarajevo, Mr. Chavany said.

Two French soldiers travelling with her, including a captain, were not detained.

"There is an increasing pattern of harassment by the Bosnian Serb Army, particularly at checkpoints around Sarajevo," UNPROFOR spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Gary Coward said here.

Such actions were "unacceptable" and impeded the U.N. in its efforts to carry out its mandate, he added.

The woman interpreter's arrest follows that over the past few weeks of two Bosnian journalists and five humanitarian aid workers — four French and one American — from Pharmaciens Sans Frontières (Pharmacists Without Borders) at Serb checkpoints around the besieged city.

In another incident Saturday morning, the Serbs sought to confiscate flak jackets from a group of U.N.

soldiers crossing another checkpoint on the way between Sarajevo and the airport.

The soldiers, who were going on leave, refused to hand over the jackets and returned to town.

On Thursday, the Serbs seized 126 flak jackets from a U.N. truck heading into town from the airport.

Serbs are also preventing fuel convoys from reaching Sarajevo and the Muslim-held eastern enclaves of Srebrenica, Gorazde and Zepa, the U.N. said. The near complete blockade of fuel has gone on since March 3.

The Serbs have also stopped nearly all medicine supplies from reaching the eastern enclaves.

The Serbs Saturday threatened to close another checkpoint, near Visoko, northwest of Sarajevo, which would effectively strand a number of U.N. Canadian soldiers inside their territory.

The Canadian contingent has evacuated all non-essential personnel from the Serb side of the line, the U.N. said.

Meanwhile, fighting picked up Saturday morning in the northwest Bihać enclave with infantry action near Velika Kladusa.

Tension mounted in the pocket after Wednesday's disappearance of General Vlado Santic, commander of the Bosnian Croat militia (HVO) fighting alongside the mainly-Muslim Bosnian government army.

Bosnian army commanders in the Bihać pocket denied involvement in the disappearance after reports said he had been kidnapped by his allies. The Croatian News Agen-

Italy's Popular Party Congress opens

ROME (Agencies) — The Italian Popular Party's (PPI) national executive meeting got underway here Saturday with acrimony in the air in a left-right clash over its newly forged alliance with Silvio Berlusconi.

PPI leader Rocco Buttiglione outraged party leftwingers when he signed a deal with Mr. Berlusconi's Freedom Alliance coalition Thursday.

Former party president Rosa Russo Jervolino set the tone for what promised to be a turbulent meeting when she announced that party leftwingers would present a document underlining that the Buttiglione-Berlusconi accord "was null and void."

She accused Mr. Buttiglione of being allied with someone (Berlusconi) who was "inciting revolt against institutions" and "affirming the need to destroy the image of the head of state." Oscar Luigi Scalfaro.

Mr. Berlusconi hailed the deal as the birth of a new, strong moderate centre in Italian politics, on the lines of the ruling Christian Democratic Union in Germany.

\$1.5b aid sought for CIS republics

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Clinton administration is asking Congress for as much as \$1.5 billion in aid to Russia and other republics of the former Soviet Union in the year beginning Oct. 1.

Another \$371 million is being sought for dismantling nuclear weapons in the area.

The figures emerged from testimony before the foreign operations panel of the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee, congressional aides said.

It was unclear how receptive the Republican-dominated Congress will be to the requests or what conditions the Republicans will seek for the allocations.

Many lawmakers have been strongly critical of administration requests for money to help Russia, largely because of its help to Iran in building a nuclear reactor.

Girl grows giant on beancurd noodles

Jordan Times

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Positive developments

THE JULY 1 deadline which Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres agreed on Thursday for holding the much-delayed Palestinian national elections and for the redeployment of Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank in preparation for these elections signals a new opening in the stalled Palestinian-Israeli talks. The agreement also promises a new positive spirit that could replace the pessimism that has engulfed the Palestinian-Israeli talks due to Tel Aviv's intransigence and failure to respect the Oslo and Cairo deals.

A prime example of the new spirit that characterised the recent round of contacts between the two parties is the agreement on an immediate opening of a free passage between the Gaza Strip and the autonomous Palestinian enclave of Jericho and the issuance of an additional 4,000 new permits to Palestinian workers to work in Israel.

There is no doubt that the Palestine National Authority's (PNA) resounding commitment to curtail "terrorism" and allow only licensed guns in the areas under its jurisdiction have given ample evidence that it is doing all it can to meet Israel's security needs. There is not much more that the PNA can do to secure the safety of Israelis without being given added opportunities to consolidate its grip on power and authority in the Palestinian territories. Holding the Palestinian elections after an effective Israeli withdrawal from the affected areas could only lend additional support to the quest for stability and security in the region.

The delay in holding these elections has created enormous obstacles in the face of achieving any progress in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. The failure of Israel to honour its commitments to the Palestinians has threatened the whole peace process with collapse. Fortunately, that has not happened yet and the new agreement offers a glimpse of hope that could save the staggering negotiations. It is Israel which can either keep that hope alive by respecting its promises or let it fade by maintaining its intransigence in dealing with the Palestinians.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily on Saturday commended the Jordanian-American relations which it said were based on mutual respect since the 1950s. These relations, said the paper, have successfully overcome many historical tests. It is expected that His Majesty King Hussein's visit to Washington in the end of March and his meeting with American President Bill Clinton would enhance bilateral relations and protect the two countries' joint interests, said the paper. We also hope that the visit to the Kingdom by American Secretary of State Warren Christopher as part of a regional tour would contribute to the success of the King's summit with Mr. Clinton and consequently support the peace process, the newspaper added. The historical friendship ties between the countries make us confident of the ability of the American administration to protect this friendship and to fulfill the requirements of such a friendship, the paper continued. We are confident that the American decision-making mechanism would not allow internal political factors to undermine the administration's foreign commitments and would not allow harming the credibility of the U.S. at the international level and thus shake international confidence in Washington's leading role in the world.

A COLUMNIST in Al Dustour Arabic daily Saturday dealt with the Ministry of Information's decision to liquidate Sawt Al Shaab newspaper and the banning of two weeklies on temporary basis. Taher Al Adwan asked if that means a confrontation between the press and the government or it is just a correction of press conditions. He said the press in Jordan works in accordance with a new press and publications law endorsed by the previous Parliament. This law, he said, allowed the press more freedom than can be tolerated by the executive authority, which is the reason why there were complaints of abusing this freedom by the press. He said there were hopes that the government would take tangible steps to privatise the official media, including the press agency and the television, in order to make Jordan an Arab and international media centre. Monopolising the mass media is a character of dictatorships and thus the government's control of the mass media contravenes the principles of democracy, he said.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

Jordan-Israel trade prospects: Reciprocity is not fair

IRRESPECTIVE OF the marginal noise against normalisation of economic relations with Israel, that some ideologists make about it is quite obvious that borders with the Jewish state will soon open for trade exchange. The peace treaty, signed on Oct. 26, requires the removal of all obstacles hindering the free flow of goods between the two countries within six months.

This does not mean only the cancellation of boycott, but also the conclusion of a trade agreement to facilitate the exchange of commodities before May 1995.

Therefore, the arguments over trade normalisation is simply a waste of time and energy. The only result is that those involved in the arguments will deprive themselves of the opportunity to participate and influence the terms of trade, which will be agreed upon in order to safeguard the best interests of Jordan.

The real question, therefore, is not whether or not we shall trade with Israel, but whether or not this trade will be fair and equitable to Jordan and will not hurt the Jordanian industrial and agricultural producers by putting them in an unprepared state of disadvantage.

It is generally known that the trade negotiations between Jordan and Israel are rather tough. It is not advancing smoothly due to the usual Israeli rigidity. Israel, it seems, is not ready to give Jordan meaningful concessions or admit that Jordan is entitled to a preferential treatment, insisting on the principle of reciprocity despite the different circumstances.

It seems at the first instance that reciprocity is fair and just, but it is not so. Jordan is a developing country while Israel is an industrialised state. It is natural that developing economies expect a preferential treatment in the markets

of industrialised and more advanced markets.

Trade exchange based on full customs exemption does not give Jordan any real advantage in the Israeli market because Israel has free trade area agreements with the European Union (EU) and the United States or North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA). To put Jordan on equal footing with Europe and America does not give Jordan a real opportunity to succeed.

On the other hand, the reciprocal tax exemption is very costly to Jordan, because custom protection is as high as 50 per cent, but it is not that costly to Israel where custom protection is much lower and most trade partners are exempted of customs anyway.

The exchange of trade without any exemptions means that Jordan will not be able to sell in the Israeli market and compete with European and American tax-exempt products, while Israel will be able to act on equal footing with Jordan's other trade partners.

The only solution is to give Jordan substantial exemptions without insisting on reciprocity, especially when Jordan cannot flood the Israeli market and has no capacity to contribute, under the best of circumstances, more than one or two per cent of the total Israeli imports.

If Israel refused to give Jordan the necessary preferential treatment, then trade between the two countries should be restricted to equal quotas which is the worst form of international trade — Egyptian style. In that case, Israel will not be allowed to export to Jordan more than it imports from Jordan. A clearing account will be conducted by the two central banks, which should be a self-liquidating account i.e., it cannot be settled except through imports from the other side.

America's quest for an Islamic policy

By Mushahid Hussein

AMERICAN ATTITUDES, official and non-official, towards questions related to Islam now revolve around a campaign that has replaced the oft-cited term "fundamentalism" with the more politically palatable term "terrorism." It is a convenient way of defining the "enemy" more as a security threat than an ideological one. There are three recent pointers to this and, despite official denials, Islam is still perceived as the single most significant "threat" to the United States, and indeed to Western strategic and "civilisational" interests, if rhetoric in the forthcoming French presidential election is any indicator of the European mood.

First there was President Bill Clinton's order of Jan. 24, freezing all assets in the U.S. of a dozen Middle Eastern organisations allegedly engaged in acts of terrorism and making it illegal for them to raise funds or have contributions sent to them from American territory. This followed Jan. 22 bombing at Beit Lid which killed 21 Israelis.

Second, there is the New York trial of the Egyptian cleric, Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, who, along with 11 others, is charged with conspiring to bomb the World Trade Centre in New York in March 1993. The U.S. Justice Department has based its conspiracy case on an old, rarely used sedition law dating back to the American civil war, accusing the 56-year-old blind imam of waging a religious "war of urban terrorism against the U.S." The U.S. prosecution has even branded Abdul Rahman as an "ardent dissenter from modern Islamic thought and practice," implying perhaps that the Clinton administration is in a better position to pass judgement on what constitutes "modern Islamic thought and practice."

In its issue of Jan. 22, the Washington Times carried a cartoon offensive to handicapped people and prejudicial to a person facing trial, in which the Sheikh was shown with his blind eye graphically depicted being led on a leash by a roaring

tiger labelled "terror."

Third, the popular misconception of Islam is evident in the recent controversy over the establishment of a Saudi-financed Muslim school in suburban Washington. The school, which fulfils all legal requirements, is being opposed on such outlandish grounds as that "it could harbour Middle East terrorists" or that its students "may shoot at low-flying aircraft landing and departing from Dulles International Airport, according to a story in the Washington Post.

The credibility gap

In this context of U.S. policy and perceptions relating to issues involving Muslims and Islam, it is not surprising that American relations with the Muslim World suffer from a serious credibility gap that is widening as the gulf continues to broaden between U.S. pronouncements and practices. Some examples of this follow. Sudan is constantly derided as a state aiding and abetting "international terrorism" and it is even listed by the State Department, together with Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, North Korea and Cuba, as a "terrorist state," although Sudan fully cooperated with France and the U.S. in the extradition of the famous terrorist Carlos. Furthermore, Syria remains on the list of the State Department's "terrorist states" but the U.S. does not hesitate to enlist Syrian support on behalf of U.S. interests, as was the case in the Gulf war or, more recently, by inviting the Syrian army chief to Washington for talks with his Israeli counterpart.

While there is considerable U.S. pressure on Muslim countries in the Arab World and outside to renew the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Israel is exempt from such pressures. Contrast this with U.S. attitudes to Iran, which remains an abiding American obsession, not just on account of "radical Islamic fundamentalism, extremism, terrorism," etc, but also due to its newly discovered alleged quest for nuclear weapons. In a wide-ranging foreign policy speech at Harvard University on Jan. 20, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, said that "the U.S. places the highest priority on denying Iran a nuclear weapons capability."

Different standards are set for Muslim states even on democracy and human rights, which the U.S. claims to uphold, as is the case with Kashmir, Bosnia, Chechnya or Algeria. In the latter, an Islamist party, which had won a fair and free poll, was denied power by the military with Washington's concurrence. The former U.S. secretary of state, James Baker, admitted to this double standard in an interview with the Middle East Quarterly when he said: "When I was at the State Department, we pursued a policy of excluding the radical fundamentalists in Algeria, even though we recognised that this was somewhat at odds with our support of democracy."

There is some evidence that the U.S. administration may be reviewing its policy of backing dissident Islamic movements in the Muslim World. It is known, for instance, that it has had discreet political contact with the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) through its embassy in Algiers. In a recent interview with The New Yorker, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak angrily told his American interviewer: "Your government is in contact with those terrorists from the Muslim Brotherhood. This has been done very secretly, without our knowledge at first. You think you can correct the mistakes you made in Iran, where you had no contact with Khomeini before he seized power."

A final illustration comes from the support provided to the Irish Republican Army (IRA) from American soil through Irish organisations like Noraid. This was never made illegal all through the 1970s and '80s, although the IRA engaged in acts of terrorism against a U.S. ally, namely Britain. This never evoked the kind of official U.S. reaction that is evident in the case of the Middle East — a classic example of different standards.

Washington's dilemma

Iran apart, the centrepiece of America's approach to the Muslim World, namely the Israel-Palestine conflict, threatens to unravel as resistance to Israeli occupation in the occupied territories often becomes synonymous among Palestinians with opposition to Yasser Arafat. This dilemma for Washington's Middle East policy was aptly summed up by a Palestinian professor, in a piece entitled "Arafat's Dilemma," in the January 1995 issue of Current History. "Arafat has to serve two masters: his people and the Israeli government. If he listens too much to the Palestinian people, his cre-

An illusion of progress in peace talks

By Patrick Worsnip
Reuters

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM — Middle East leaders are creating an appearance of action for U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher as he makes his first tour of the region in three months to get the stalled peace process back on track.

Whether this will result in real moves forward is less certain, but Mr. Christopher, whose relatively lengthy absence from the Middle East was partly dictated by having to deal with a new and hostile Congress, seems to have got one point across.

This is that he cannot keep up last year's schedule of taking a week out of every month to tour the area merely to hear the parties — who have been urgently seeking his return in recent weeks — repeat that their positions are unchanged.

As Mr. Christopher flew in to the region last Wednesday, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) were busy repairing some of the damage done by their 1993 peace deal by their dispute over the Islamic guerrilla threat to Israeli security.

In an announcement on Thursday, Israel agreed to a July 1 target date for agreement on troop redeployment in the West Bank and Palestinian elections, while the PLO made fresh pledges to crack down on the Islamic suicide bombers.

The same day, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin made a lightning visit to Jordan to brief His Majesty King Hussein in the kind of quick and easy Arab-Israeli contact Washington likes to see.

Though U.S. officials denied playing a direct role, the moves enabled them to claim that Mr. Christopher, whose mission started off in a mood of some pessimism, was making headway.

"Every time that we have seen (the peace process) under stress, under pressure, under challenge, there has always been this clear determination to stick with negotiations as a way to solve problems," one official said triumphantly.

But questions linger over whether the latest Israel-PLO accord will really bring the promised troop withdrawals and elections, moves that should have occurred eight months ago.

Can it survive another

suicide bombing in Israel, and can it reserve the ebbing tide of support among ordinary Arabs and Israelis for a peace that has brought Israeli only new guerrilla outrages and Palestinians just fresh economic woes?

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat has promised to put guerrillas on trial soon. But some Western diplomats doubt whether he will prosecute any important figures at a time when Israeli troops continue to shoot Palestinians and Israeli settlements in the West Bank continue to expand.

Meanwhile, U.S. officials are trying to tackle the economic problem by refocusing aid to the Palestinians to produce what they call "visible" progress — improved houses, roads and sewers and above all new jobs in the depressed Gaza Strip.

For these officials, and most analysts, see the success of the Israel-PLO deal as central to the entire Middle East peace process, and in particular the chances of bringing in Syria, the key remaining hold-out country.

Syria may not agree to a Golan Heights deal with Israel even with an Israeli-PLO settlement. But it almost certainly will not without one political analysts argue.

U.S., Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian and Egyptian leaders have been repeating that time is slipping away for an accord with Syria before campaigning starts for next year's Israeli elections that could bring the hawkish Likud Party to power.

Only Syria itself has not joined in the chorus, presumably because it fears that to do so would weaken its bargaining position. Some Syrian officials have suggested Mr. Rabin may feel he will do better at the polls without an agreement with Syria.

Still, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres commented on Saturday: "The Syrians are also beginning to understand that time is running out. I'm not saying this to make an impression. We have 20 months left which are irreplaceable."

U.S. officials are hoping for some Syrian gesture when Mr. Christopher visits Damascus in the next few days, notably an agreement to resume direct talks with Israel in Washington which were broken off last December.

LETTERS

Who is in debt to whom?

To the Editor:

AT THIS time when Jordanian journalists, academics and prominent political figures are busy denouncing American's "backsliding" on its pledges to reduce Jordanian indebtedness, and calling it "a danger to the peace process," we should ask ourselves whether this is either a truthful or a useful exercise.

The linkage between the Jordanian peace initiative and Jordanian indebtedness was made first by American spokesmen and the American media. It is strange, therefore, to find that those who are today criticising America are echoing an appraisal of Jordan's motives in making peace with Israel, which reduces the event to a sordid transaction for monetary considerations.

Instead of implying that His Majesty King Hussein went to Washington to ask America for money, they should be asking the question "who is in debt to whom?"

Jordan's financial indebtedness to the USA, Great Britain, France and other countries is the product of the accumulated demands on its very limited resources caused by three wars in the region, and three major influxes of displaced persons.

Any "comprehensive and lasting peace" in the region must address this problem, and assign an equitable division of responsibility, moral and financial, between the participants in the Arab-Israeli conflicts of the last 50 years. This includes the international community as well as the Arab states and Israel. In that partition of responsibility, Jordan emerges as a major claimant for reparations for the human and financial burdens it has carried.

Those who claim to represent or to inform Jordanian public opinion should not echo the view of others, but base their opinions on Jordanian realities. Jordan is a creditor, not a debtor on the international scene; and the peace process is not a quid pro quo — peace for pennies — but an irreversible step towards a just and viable resolution of the region's problems.

Cecil Horani,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

How Islamist militants put Egypt on trial

Raymond Stock became part of a courtroom drama following the stabbing of an Arab Nobel prize winner

IT IS a long drive from central Cairo to the former military aerodrome at Halkstep. It sits in the desert on the Ismailiyah Road, beyond the last high-rise buildings that mark the limits of greater Cairo. Dunes rise across the road from the base, dwarfing its walls. Special buses take visitors several kilometres from the main entrance to the shabby amphitheatre where the Military High Court meets.

These bleak surroundings have been the set for the extraordinary trial of the men accused of last October's murder attempt on writer Naguib Mahfouz, the Arab World's first Nobel laureate in literature.

Halkstep has become one of the main battlefields in the Egyptian government's war against Islamist militants, which has claimed more than 640 lives in the last three years. During this period, the authorities have used military tribunals to prosecute civilians accused of terrorism after ordinary courts failed to produce results. Trials and punishments have been swift. The case of those accused of trying to kill Mahfouz, who was stabbed twice in the neck outside his Cairo home on Oct. 14, was no exception.

When the six-week trial ended on Jan. 10, two of the 16 defendants, who faced charges ranging from attempting to kill Mahfouz and plotting against the security of the state, to belonging to the illegal Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah (Islamic Group), were given death sentences. Two others received life imprisonment, nine received terms ranging from three to 15 years, and three were acquitted.

Unless President Hosni Mubarak intervenes the two condemned men, Mohamed Nagi Mustafa, 21, an electrical appliance repairman convicted of the actual assault on Mahfouz, and Mohamed Khudayr Al Mahalawi, 23, a student, face execution by hanging.

The murder, three years ago of Farag Foda, a secularist writer and friend of Mahfouz, marked a turn in the war — the killing of intellectuals. Mahfouz had aroused the militants' wrath with his 1959 novel *Awlad Haratina* (published in English as *Children of Gebelawi*).

Before the Halkstep trial, Nagi had confessed on television that he had stabbed Mahfouz in execution of a death sentence issued in a fatwa (religious legal opinion) by Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, now on trial on terrorism con-

spiracy charges in New York.

In early 1989, shortly after Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa against the author Salman Rushdie, Abdul Rahman condemned Mahfouz for his allegedly blasphemous *Gebelawi*. Abdul Rahman is said to have declared that if Mahfouz had been punished in 1959, Rushdie would never have published his *Satanic Verses* in 1988.

In spite of the threat, Mahfouz refused police protection. He proved, however, a difficult target. Even though he was 83 in December and sustained serious injuries in the attack, Mahfouz survived the knife.

That the nearly deaf-and-blind Mahfouz, who walks with a cane, suffers from sugar diabetes and a heart condition, even made it through the operation is a miracle, say his doctors. The impairment of his writing hand was the assailant's symbolic, if Pyrrhic, victory.

Ironically, Nagi, who claimed he had never read any of Mahfouz's work, had difficulty using his left arm during the trial, the result of a police bullet caught during his capture.

His capture came quickly. The speed and range of arrests after the attack raised questions about whether this was just a case of rounding up "the usual suspects."

Yet the contradictory behaviour of the defendants before, during and after the trial, and the vagueness of some of the physical evidence, makes it even more difficult to assess their guilt. It is also typical of the bizarre, almost Alice in Wonderland-like conundrum that confronts anyone trying to make sense of events in Egypt.

The clues start the night before the attack. At 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 13, Mahfouz's sixth Nobel anniversary, two men claiming to be admirers of the writer, bearing flowers and sweets, stopped at this apartment. Mahfouz's wife, Atyah, told them that Naguib was not home; they could find him the next day at 5 p.m. in his weekly *nadwah* (literary salon). The men, one dressed as a Gulf Arab, then left. Atyah later told me, "they had funny-sounding accents for Gulf Arabs."

At 4:50 p.m. on Friday, the novelist got into the red 1989 Fiat Regata in which Fathi Hashem, a pharmaceutical marketer, took him each week at the same time from his doorstep to the *nadwah*. An elegantly

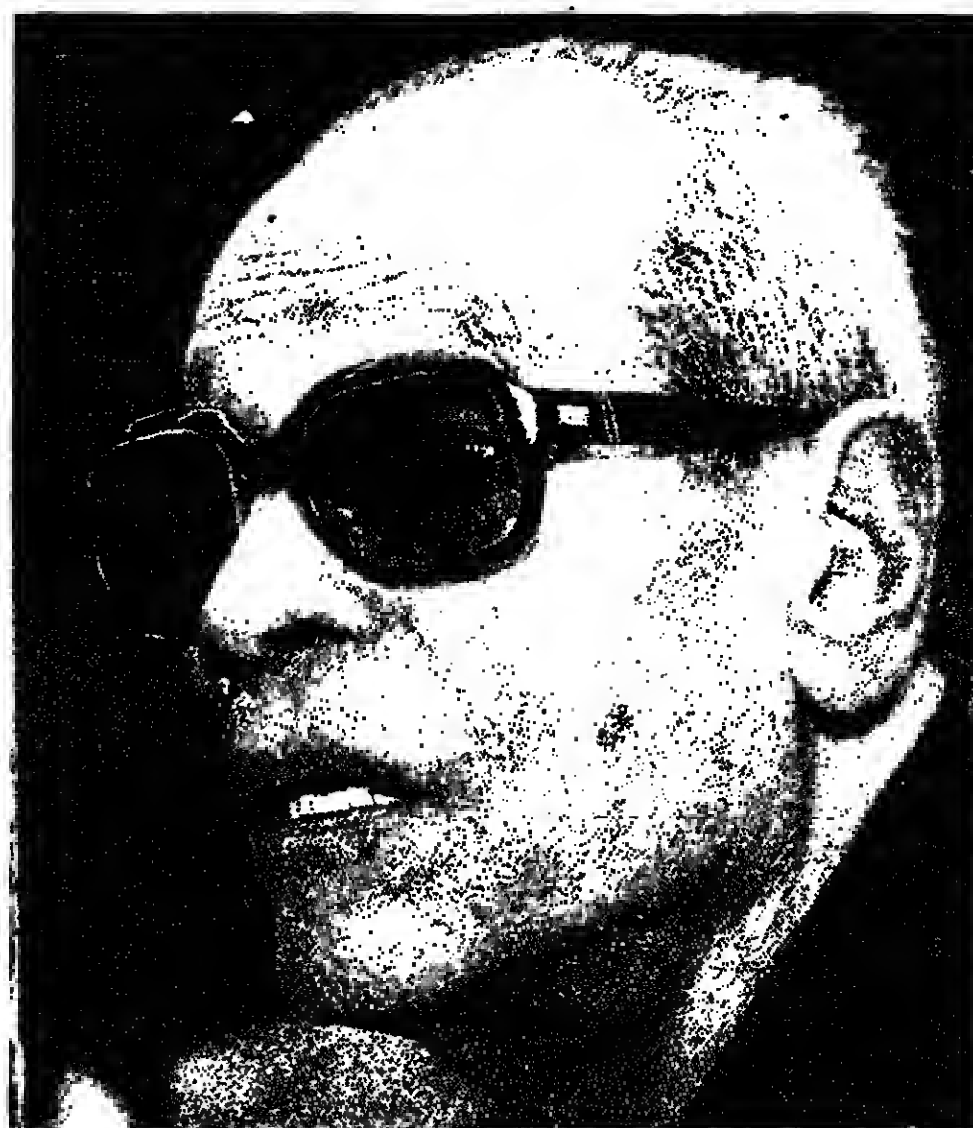
A LIFE FOREVER CHANGED: Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz, who was stabbed outside his Cairo home on Oct. 14, now lives in a "fortress" with security people accompanying him on all his moves (File photo)

dressed young man approached from the footpath nearby. The affable Mahfouz, unable to see who it was, offered the vaguely human shape his hand through the open car window. Instead of shaking it, the presumed well-wisher stabbed Mahfouz twice in the neck.

Hashem chased the assailant but remembering the wounded Mahfouz, rushed back to his side. He pulled the knife from the writer's neck and threw it on the ground, where it was later recovered. Hashem then put his hand on Mahfouz's wound to stop the flow of blood, and backed his car up to the hospital next door. Within moments, the stolid old novelist was in surgery.

With almost equal speed, government ministers were at his bedside and television crew in train. This turned the writer, who had avoided any overt political role all his life, from a symbol of Egypt's literary genius into an icon of victory in the struggle with the extremists.

The arrests came just as quickly. On Saturday, the main group of alleged conspirators were in custody after a raid on a coffeehouse in the Cairo district of Ain Shams. Several, in-



cluding Nagi and Mahalawi, were wounded. Their purported ringleader, Basim Khalil, reportedly died exchanging gunfire with security forces in the same raid.

During the next few days, dozens of people were said to have been held in a sweep for people thought involved — including several who had been extradited from neighbouring Arab states.

The handful of Egyptian journalists who covered the trial, the defendants, their lawyers and even a few security people had a name for the proceedings. They called it a *masrahiyah*, a stage play. Everyone supposedly knew their part, and how things would turn out. And from the start there was an atmosphere of depressing theatrics and futile haggling in the courtroom.

The trial's opening on Dec. 6 felt vaguely off-Broadway. The defendants, all bearded and with heads shaven, sat in their cages clad in thin, white cotton clothes against the cold. At their counsel's request, the chief judge called out to each defendant by his first name, asking what had happened to them in custody. Each then recited a list of injuries

suffered during and after their apprehension.

The judge, in his brigadier's uniform, listened to the litany with politeness, adjourned the court, and left.

As he did so, a tumult began. Reporters and photographers rushed at the cages, and, in a single movement, the defendants lifted their shirts to show the scars allegedly inflicted by the state.

Yet, defying predictions, the defence did not try to justify the crime by accusing Mahfouz of *kufri* (unbelief), but instead tried to show that the defendants simply had no connection with the crime.

On the second day of the trial, when one bearded lawyer urged the court to seek the opinion of Al Azhar, Egypt's centre of Islamic orthodoxy, about Mahfouz as a Muslim, one of his colleagues shoved him aside. "We don't care whether Mahfouz is a kafir (unbeliever), or whatever said Yehia Kassem, a big, sleek, mustachioed man in his late 40s, with the manner of an Egyptian Perry Mason. Instead, he said, the question was whether these men had committed specific crimes, and the defence would show that they had not.

Throughout the trial, the defendants continued to claim innocence. Although, reportedly, they made contradictory statements to the press. To me, they denied any hostility to Mahfouz, and said they were loyal neither to Abdul Rahman nor the Islamic Group, of which he is said to be spiritual leader. I asked Nagi, a slender, young man, whether he had knifed Mahfouz, "whether he thought him an unbeliever, and if he even had an opinion as to whether he was an unbeliever." "No," he replied to each question.

Later, I tried to test him more thoroughly. I told Nagi that I usually ride with Mahfouz and Hashem on Fridays to the *nadwah*, in the same car in which the attack took place. On the day of the assault, I was in New York; had I returned to Egypt on schedule, I would likely have been in the car with them. Nagi blushed. "I didn't know anything about it until the next day," he hurried, eyes cast down in embarrassment.

Like all the defendants, Nagi claimed that he had been tortured. He told me that his television confession was done "under pressure," and that "there

was someone behind me" prompting his responses to questions. Nagi said that he never met anyone from the press before the trial.

The chief physical evidence against Nagi was apparently a handprint found on Hashem's car. Kassem said this did not show up in police tests until six weeks after the crime. Fathi Hashem, the chief witness, was never shown Nagi in person, but identified him from photographs. In court, Hashem said that he had only seen the upper half of the assailant's face.

In spite of defence demands for their appearance, neither Mahfouz nor his wife testified. Mahfouz, excused on health grounds, told prosecutors that he could not see who stabbed him. The chief judge refused to ask Atyah, who tentatively identified from photos both Nagi and Basim Khalil, the man killed in the Oct. 15 raid, as the two men who visited their home the night before the attack, to come before the tribunal.

There were powerful personal ironies for me at Halkstep. While getting to know the defendants and, to a lesser extent, their families, an awkward rapport developed between us. My status as a non-Muslim foreigner, who also had a close relationship with Mahfouz, did not seem to bother them. As an American, they probably felt I offered a better channel for them to the outside world.

On the day of judgment the chief judge simply read the verdicts and left — it was over in less than 10 minutes. Instantly dropping their apologetic poses, the prisoners shouted Islamist slogans. As I tried to reach Nagi, a group of defendants called out: "Raymond — tell Naguib Mahfouz that he has no place on earth. Tell him that by God and the Prophet, he is an unbeliever." I replied sharply: "You denied all this during the trial."

As I got close to Nagi, he was talking to someone. When he looked my way, his face was affectionate. While I struggled to summon the words to ask him once again if he were truly guilty, and what he felt at the moment, a security man pulled me away. As I looked back over my shoulder, I could barely make Nagi out as the crowd was cleared away.

Back at the main entrance, we found the frightened families of the defendants. The principal defendant's mother spotted me. "What about Mohamed Nagi?" she asked. "Execu-

tion," I whispered. She slapped her cheeks in despair and ran away, wailing.

The trial at Halkstep may or may not have told us "what happened." After the attack on Mahfouz, there was much talk about a possible Algeria-like campaign to eliminate intellectuals that the Islamists consider enemies of God. So far, this has not happened, although revenge killings after the executions are feared. And the surge in violence in Upper Egypt which followed the trial seemed unrelated to the events on the Ismailiyah Road.

Yet the war is now merciless. Al Haqq Ali Gadd Al Haqq, the Sheikh of Al Azhar, said last month that the militants were false Muslims who "should be killed, or crucified, or have their hands and feet cut off," punishments not legal in Egypt. Meanwhile, state security forces have killed a number of alleged Islamist terrorists, some in questionable circumstances.

For their part, the militants, accusing the Mubarak regime of rampant corruption and of failing to establish an Islamic state, have murdered hundreds of policemen, soldiers and bystanders, harassed and killed members of the country's Coptic Christian minority, tried to assassinate the president and several government ministers, and shot foreign tourists. But the attack on Mahfouz proved a costly blunder for the militants in their campaign for the hearts and minds of Egyptians against the government.

As for Mahfouz, his life is changed utterly. Although his health is improving and his spirits good, his right arm may never be the same. When he ventures out of his home, now a fortress, he moves in an armed convoy. His friends joke nervously about all the guns, but their freedom of movement, taken for granted for 50 years, is gone.

When I briefed Mahfouz on the trial, his remarks were terse. "They knew the law, and what they were doing, at the start," he said, stabbing the air with his weakened hand, his still-hoarse voice rising in anger. "Implementing the law requires no comment."

Raymond Stock is writing a biography of Naguib Mahfouz for Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc. Book Publishers in New York. He lives in Cairo. This article is reprinted from the *Financial Times*.

Nasser reelected JBA head

(Continued from page 1)

Massadeh was the only one of the five presidential candidates to support the minister of justice's decision.

The election of Mr. Nasser is viewed as a setback to government efforts to stem a tide of "anti-normalisation" sentiment in professional associations. The bar association, along with other professional associations, has vocally opposed Jordan's peace

treaty with Israel despite warnings from the government that it should recommit itself to addressing issues related to the profession rather than meddling in politics.

The association, which has historically acted as a political forum in the absence of political parties, insists that a majority of lawyers and Jordanian society opposes the treaty, and the JBA, as a popular party, has a right to continue to resist normalisation with Israel.

Iraq urges Kurds to talks

(Continued from page 12)

18. The shelling of Kifri southwest of Sulaymaniyah destroyed dozens of homes and "hundreds of families have been forced to leave the town, creating a refugee exodus," the PUK said in a statement.

But Mr. Sahaf said that "what is happening in northern Iraq is a clash between Kurdish factions."

Baghdad last week denied Kurdish reports that its army was massing close to northern Iraq and shelling towns in the region.

But it confirmed that fighting had taken place with the PUK on Sunday night, saying its army had driven back a PUK attack, causing several casualties among the Kurds.

The KDP appears to be more amenable to negotiating for Kurdish autonomy with the Iraqi government than the PUK, which has always been more hostile to Baghdad than its rival.

If Iraq has launched a major offensive, it would force the PUK to fight on two fronts and eliminating it could open the way for a dialogue between the KDP and Baghdad.

There have been unconfirmed reports that Iraq has also reinforced its troops in the south, where they have been fighting an intermittent war with Shiite Muslim rebels since another ill-fated rebellion right after the Gulf war.

Blast kills woman

A would-be woman bomber died inside the security headquarters of the KDP on Saturday when an explosive device smuggled under her full-length chador went off prematurely, security officers for the group said.

A senior KDP official said the woman, identified as Khadija Abdullah Gbafur, had close ties to the PUK.

Arafat seeks Cairo's help

(Continued from page 1)

that a breakthrough was achieved in the latest round with Peres which is not quite true. The only breakthrough can be achieved when we reach an agreement on both the troop withdrawal and holding elections," he said.

Palestinian sources in Cairo said Mr. Arafat planned to ask Mr. Mubarak to urge Japan to increase financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority. Mr. Mubarak starts a three-day visit to Japan on Sunday.

Earlier, Mr. Mubarak told the Egyptian cabinet that the Middle East peace process "is going through the most difficult stage."

Mr. Mubarak said he hoped the current regional tour by Mr. Christopher would "result in the removal of obstacles hindering the peace process on its various tracks and achieve progress."

Mr. Arafat's visit to Cairo came ahead of meetings by the central committee of his mainstream Fatah faction and of the PLO Executive Committee, set for Mid-March in Tunis.

There is significant opposition to the autonomy deal in both committees and Mr. Arafat is hoping for concrete moves from Israel to win over his critics.

Mr. Peres said Friday Israel and the PLO broke through the stalemate in their negotiations during weeks of secret talks in which they decided to implement the next stage of autonomy in gradual steps.

"What we agreed to and announced yesterday is that

the redeployment and the transfer of authorities (in the West Bank) will be carried out in a gradual manner," Mr. Peres said on Israel's second television channel.

"We will take a step, we will see the reactions and the actions. And then we will take another step," he said.

Mr. Peres revealed that during past weeks, Israelis and Palestinians continued to meet quietly, and were able to draw up a game plan for renewing negotiations.

"We conducted quiet negotiations in the past weeks and we reached the conclusion that will carry out the second stage in pieces," he said. "Each piece will include redeployment, transfer of authorities, security issues, economic issues."

Dr. Shaath confirmed on Friday the talks had taken place.

"We don't declare all our negotiations," said Dr. Shaath, a minister in the Palestinian Authority.

"There was a meeting in Sweden and we discussed ways to get out of the crisis we were in."

Mr. Peres said he believed Mr. Arafat had begun to rein in militants "much more than he did before," and that Palestinian policemen in the Gaza Strip had apparently foiled a number of attempted attacks in Israel. He said Israel demanded from Mr. Arafat an even greater crackdown.

Another Palestine official said the Palestinian self-rule authority is to debate different alternatives on the fate of Jerusalem.

Copenhagen summit ends today

(Continued from page 1)

"I believe the system is incompatible with the struggle against poverty in the world," said Mr. Castro, one of the world's few remaining Marxist leaders.

Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson, echoing comments from other leaders, said only real action would prove whether the world could live up to its commitments in Copenhagen.

He said: "Either we make history together ... or history will judge us as guilty of losing an opportunity to change an inhuman and unjust order."

France, Denmark and Germany all proposed action in the fight against poverty, unemployment and social exclusion — the key themes of the summit.

French President Francois Mitterrand urged a trade-off between rich and poor countries: increased aid from wealthy to developing countries which were ready to end the exploitation of children and other workers.

The Copenhagen declaration contains 10 non-binding commitments and a 65-page plan of action.

It has been criticised by many Third World delegates and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for failing to provide new financial resources or to make firm commitments in a specified time to tackle the problem of developing countries' debt, now estimated at nearly \$2,000 billion.

Saud holds talks in Syria

(Continued from page 1)

On Sunday at the start of a three-day trip that includes talks with Mr. Arafat in Gaza and King Hussein in Amman.

In an interview broadcast on Israeli Radio, Mr. Major said he believed confidence-building measures by all sides would contribute to the Middle East peace process.

"Terrorism has been and is a threat to the Middle East peace process," said Mr. Major, citing a series of guerrilla attacks in Israel.

Asked if he believed Syria's expulsion of an alliance of 10 Palestinian guerrilla groups from Damascus would help, Mr. Major said: "I think it would certainly help in terms of a confidence-building measure."

Mr. Major arrives in Israel

Qatar questions sanctions

(Continued from page 12)

The treaty, signed by about 160 countries, is up for renewal next month. Several Arab countries, including Syria and now Iraq, have said they might not endorse it.

Al Rays said Mr. Sahaf will lead to Oman after Qatar.

The two countries are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which is led by Saudi Arabia and includes Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait adamantly oppose lifting the sanctions, while Oman and Qatar have called for easing the measures to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people.

Qatar sent 2,500 tonnes of sugar to Iraq last month.

At the United Nations, the U.S. ambassador said Thursday that an Iraqi claim that the vast majority of the military equipment it is accused of taking from Kuwait was left behind is an "insult" to the Security Council.

U.S. Ambassador Madeleine Albright has been lobbying council members to maintain the sanctions against Iraq and has shown council members satellite photographs reportedly showing elite Iraqi units using some of the Kuwaiti military equipment.

The United States has demanded the return of the equipment as a condition for lifting the sanctions.

An Iraqi letter to the council lists some 23,000 pieces of missing Kuwaiti equipment, but says that all except 2,400 items were left in Kuwait or

at sea at the end of the Gulf war. Iraq is offering to return the equipment if it says remains but says it is damaged and difficult to transport.

"The letter claims Iraq still has only a few of these items despite abundant evidence to the contrary," Ms. Albright said.

"The letter is an insult to the council and to any intelligent person," she said. "It shows that Iraq is not ready to take the steps necessary to see the sanctions regime modified."

In a letter released Thursday, Kuwaiti Ambassador Mohammed Albulassan said Iraq used 200 captured armoured personnel carriers when it sent troops toward the Kuwaiti border in October and has refused to return Hawk anti-aircraft missiles.

Ms. Albright has said that United States has satellite photographs confirming that the armoured vehicles were used by Iraq's elite Republican Guards.

Ms. Albright accused Iraq of purposely damaging the equipment and said the letter "demonstrates that Iraq's intentions are not only peaceful, but not even serious."

The Iraqi letter says that Hawk missiles were left in Kuwait after Iraqi forces withdrew in 1991 as were 21 of the armoured vehicles, it says that only four damaged armoured personnel carriers can be returned.

"The property that has been handed over is damaged and is difficult to transport," Iraq Ambassador Nizab Hamdoun said in his letter.

World Bank: Poor should not pay for economic reform

COPENHAGEN (R) — The World Bank, accused by development groups of creating social problems with the reform programmes it promotes, said Friday the poor should not be made to pay for the transition to market economies.

And in a speech to the United Nations Social Summit, the bank's acting president Sørensen Sandstrom suggested developing and ex-communist countries were themselves partly responsible for a surge of poverty during the reform process.

"Sound economic policies are the starting point for social progress," Mr. Sandstrom declared in a reassessment of the bank's insistence on recipients of its financing should be aiming for the establishment of market systems.

"But we have learned during the process of economic reform — before higher growth leads to substantial poverty reduction — vulnerable groups left out or hurt by the transition must be protected," he said.

"Safety nets to protect the

families of laid-off workers combined with active programmes to help the unemployed find jobs are particularly important," he pointed out.

The bank, with its sister institution the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have been targeted by a wide range of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at the Copenhagen gathering as the prime villains in a surge of poverty around the globe.

Structural adjustment packages imposed by the two have consistently undermined economic and social progress in the countries where they were applied, said a declaration signed by hundreds of NGOs and citizens' groups at the summit Friday.

Clearly responding to such charges, Mr. Sandstrom told government delegates at a plenary session of the week-long summit the bank "has worked extensively in recent years on the provision of safety nets and other special measures."

"But we recognise that we must do more to help our borrowers protect social ex-

penditure during the period of economic transition, and beyond this, to focus social spending on the poor," he said.

"That means primary education, basic health care, and the early needs of children. Economic transition must not be at their expense," he added.

Heads of state and government and political leaders from 120 countries are expected to sign an already controversial final declaration setting out a blueprint for alleviating world poverty and unemployment.

Many NGOs say the language expected to emerge from protracted negotiations on a final text are likely to make it ineffective. They say insistence that pure market economics can solve social ills is wrong.

But Mr. Sandstrom said the declaration recognised that sound economic policies and investment in people were essential for poverty reduction and social progress. However, resources had to be used efficiently and effectively.

In education, he said, excessive emphasis was often given to higher education at the expense of primary schooling — favouring children from richer families and hitting at the poor who could not afford university fees.

"As a result, in some African countries the current generation of children is likely to receive less than half the years of schooling than do those in other countries in the region, even though per capita incomes and public spending on education are about the same," Mr. Sandstrom declared.

In health, he said, "most poor people do not have access to hospitals, yet that is where 50 to 70 per cent of public health expenditures in developing countries go."

By contrast in China, the World Bank officials added, although one per cent less of gross domestic product was spent on health than by other countries at the same per capita income level, life expectancy was 10 years higher because Beijing focussed on basic health services.

Oman eases rules for foreign investors

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The Gulf state of Oman has eased restrictions on foreign investment as part of sweeping economic reforms aimed at bolstering its economy against fluctuating oil prices.

Under new rules for foreign investment issued in 1994, the government created a special committee to end bureaucratic red-tape, expanded tax incentives and allowed foreigners to fully own projects in some sectors.

It is the first Arab Gulf country to remove terms for national partnership that have scared off foreign investors and blocked attempts to obtain technology from key industrial countries through joint ventures.

The new Omani law, details of which were obtained by AFP Saturday, enables foreigners to exceed the 49 per cent partnership rule with locals and own up to 100 per cent of enterprises.

"Foreigners can now have 100 per cent ownership in

projects which are deemed necessary for the Omani economy provided their capital is not less than 500,000 Omani riyals (\$1.3 million)," the law says.

"Priority will be given to projects in the industrial and agricultural sector that use local products and raw materials and help increase the value added as well as export-oriented and capital intensive projects," the law adds.

Foreign investors will have exemptions of up to 10 years for income tax and a similar period for customs tariffs on imports of equipment and raw materials for the projects.

The law — the most liberal investment rule in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — also provides for cheap, long-term leasing of land for investors and the freedom to transfer capital and profits.

The new measures are part of economic reforms launched in the past few years that include privatisation,

freeing interest rates and opening up the stock market.

The government has already sold five institutions to the public and is planning to launch major projects jointly with the private sector.

One project already launched involves the construction of a \$70 million power station in the central region of Minah, in which foreigners have a 65 per cent stake.

Other projects included \$6 million gas liquefaction plant, a petrochemical complex at a cost of around \$700 million and two sewage treatment plants in Muscat and Salalah at a cost of \$729 million.

Last month, Mahmoud Al Jarwani, director of the Muscat Exchange, said the reforms had attracted around 200 million riyals (\$520 million) in 1994 and between 250 and 300 million riyals (\$650-\$780 million) were expected to be invested this year.

"In the coming years we expect foreign investment to

pick up, given the liberal economic laws and incentives we have introduced," he told AFP by telephone Saturday.

"What also makes Oman attractive for investors is its location in a vast consumer region and its abundant energy and cheap labour."

Oman, which is not a member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, produced more than 800,000 barrels per day (b/d) of crude oil in 1994, compared with around 765,000 b/d in 1993.

Despite a decline in oil prices during that period, its revenues rose to 1.28 billion riyals (\$3.33 billion) in 1994 from 1.03 billion riyals (\$2.67 billion) in 1993, according to official Omani figures.

The increase offset a decline in some sectors and boosted the total gross domestic product by nearly six per cent, to 3.35 billion riyals (\$8.65 billion) from 3.14 billion riyals (\$8.16 billion).

South Africa scraps exchange control currency

JOHANNESBURG (R) — South Africa will scrap its annual rand exchange control currency Monday, and revert to a single unified rand, Finance Minister Chris Liebenberg said Friday.

The government has decided that as from Monday, March 13 1995, the exchange control restrictions on the convertibility and repatriation of the local sale proceeds of non-resident owned South African investment will be repealed. The financial rate system will therefore effectively be terminated, he said in a statement.

The country's biggest employer organisation, the South African Chamber of Commerce (SACOB) welcomed its abolition, saying it was a sound first step in the action of abolishing all exchange control restrictions.

It is line with SACOB's views on the liberalisation of exchange controls. "SACOB has been a strong proponent of the abolition of the financial rand reflects a confidence by the government in the stability of South Africa and a willingness to subject economic policies to the test of the market. This confidence is sure to be noticed by international investment community," it said.

Financial markets are expected to be volatile when trading begins Monday, analysts said, but no substantial weakening in the rand is

expected.

The rand traded after the announcement at between 3.65 to 3.68 to the dollar from closing level of 3.6400/500 in the commercial rand and 3.7476 in the financial rand.

Analysts said they expected the new unitary rand to find a level of about 3.70 to the dollar Monday.

The financial rand had been used by non-residents to invest in, or divest from, local securities.

South African Reserve Bank Governor Chris Stals said the scrapping of the financial rand would not require any real devaluation of the new unitary rand.

"It will not require any real devaluation of the rand," Mr. Stals told Reuters by telephone from Pretoria.

He said the bank no preconceived idea of what level the rand should have, but said the Reserve Bank would be watching the market "very closely" when the unitary rand is reintroduced Monday.

Mr. Liebenberg and Ms. Stals said at this stage, exchange controls applying to foreign investments by South African residents remain in force.

Mr. Liebenberg said when the financial rand is abolished, South Africa would have only one unitary exchange rate which will apply to both current and capital transactions between residents and non-residents.

IMF chief announces massive new loan initiatives for Russia

MOSCOW (AFP) — International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief Michel Camdessus gave the go-ahead here Friday for a crucial \$6.5 billion IMF loan to Russia and opened up the possibility of a follow-up \$19.5 billion credit.

Mr. Camdessus signed an agreement to support Russia's application for the \$6.5 billion loan — to be paid out in instalments over the next year starting in April after it goes before the IMF board in Washington.

He told a press conference: "We are in the preliminary stage of a preliminary discussion" of including Russia in an IMF "extended fund facility" which would give Moscow a \$19.5 billion loan over three or four years.

Mr. Camdessus stressed that instalments of the first credit would depend on Russia sticking to a strict economic programme for 1995 signed Friday by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and central bank chairwoman Tatiana Paramonova.

And he indicated that the second loan would come only after an "intense" and successful stabilisation of the Russian economy. "We are not there, but the possibility is open," the IMF head said.

Russian first deputy prime minister Anatoly Chubais said: "What happened in the

Kremlin today was an international vote of confidence in Russian reform in 1995. We can say confidently that we shall stop inflation in 1995."

The two men were speaking after a meeting between Mr. Camdessus and other IMF officials with President Boris Yeltsin and members of his government.

Mr. Camdessus said he was particularly encouraged by Mr. Yeltsin's pledge to throw his full weight behind the 1995 economic programme, which would "sow the seeds for recovery of production and the living standards of the Russian people."

The programme includes a 50 per cent cut in the budget deficit, a commitment to avoid inflationary central bank financing of the deficit, tight monetary policies and the freeing up of foreign trade rules.

Mr. Camdessus warned that sticking to the programme would not be easy. "We should not fool ourselves," he said.

But he added that Russia had already made "enormous strides" in economic reform and that the IMF was ready to help Moscow restart negotiations on its \$35 billion debt to the Paris Club of public sector creditors.

Yemen hikes charges of basic services

SANAA (R) — Impoverished Yemen has raised the prices of some basic services by up to 100 per cent, making them out of reach for many citizens, a local newspaper reported.

The electricity ministry surprised consumers with bills containing huge sums (to pay) which exceed the monthly income of many.

The weekly May 22 newspaper said.

The weekly, published by the General Peoples Congress of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, said electricity prices went up 100 per cent in January. Prior to the increase a kilowatt/hour cost 2.5 riyals.

According to the official exchange rate, a U.S. dollar is worth 12 riyals but the Yemeni currency has been steadily falling on the black market, down to 115 riyals to the dollar.

The weekly said rates for various transportation ser-

vices had also been raised, adding that some officials believe the new measures, in line with World Bank and International Monetary Fund-prescribed reforms, would improve Yemen's weak economy.

The two national flag carriers raised prices for domestic travel by 60 per cent in February and are demanding a 100 per cent increase on international flights to be introduced this month, the weekly added.

"The inclination to lift remaining subsidies and raise fuel prices is still under discussion... whilst subsidies are expected to be lifted by 40 per cent as a first step," the

weekly said.

A litre of fuel currently sells for six riyals and the weekly said telephone rates were expected to rise by 100 per cent.

Although Yemen recently joined the elite club of Arab oil exporters it is still one of the region's poorest states.

Diplomats and economists put the annual inflation rate at between 60 and 100 per cent while unemployment in Yemen, which has a population of 14 million, runs at 30 per cent of the estimated four million people workforce.

They put Yemen's foreign debt at about \$8 billion owed mostly to the former Soviet Union for past military sales.

Kuwaitis: Weak dollar pressuring OPEC states for economic reform

KUWAIT (R) — Dollar weakness has underlined the need for fundamental economic reform in OPEC states, which have no short-term remedy for the squeeze on oil revenues pegged to the U.S. currency, Kuwaiti economists said Saturday.

Members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) are unlikely to meet to arrange some quick fix to their predicament and the dollar's slide can be mitigated only by more prudent economic management, the emirate's Al Shall Economics Consultancy said.

"It is unlikely that OPEC, already unable to defend nominal oil prices, will meet to discuss how to counter its exports' reduced real value," Shall said in a weekly review.

"The oil countries can do

nothing except reorganise their domestic affairs, adopt more prudent economic policies, control their expenditures, especially military ones, and begin establishing good neighbourly relations," the consultancy pointed out.

"The low exchange rate of the dollar will constitute a real pressuring factor on oil producing countries' general finances, with implicit political and social consequences," it added.

OPEC President Ida Bagus Sudjana said Thursday a weak U.S. dollar was a blow to oil producers because the real income from oil exports is falling.

Mr. Sudjana also said he did not see any possible move by OPEC, which produces about 37 per cent of the world's oil, to stop pegging oil prices to the U.S. currency.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY MARCH 12, 1995

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You want to make some changes and be off on a trip today which is fine as long as you use care and tact. Be alert to a new philosophy of life.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Handle any responsibilities well today that you have assumed and keep your promises meticulously. Show that you are active and dynamic in all your endeavours.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) If you push an associate less, you'll gain more cooperation. Civic tasks seem difficult now, so handle only what is necessary and try to relax this evening.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You need to handle many tasks, so get an early start. Be encouraged by fellow associates and gain their support.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Concentrate on furthering and deepening relationships that have brought you much joy in the past. Do favours for those with whom you are most fond.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You have to be tactful with those who live with you to increase happiness at home. Try to help them more. Not a good time for entertaining this evening.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You have to use patience with partners today and ease a tense situation. Be very careful in driving, especially on the highway. Be more affectionate.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Curb that temptation to spend too much money today and maintain present security. Listen to what monetary experts have to suggest. Investigate new investment programmes.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Analyse some situation very cleverly and say very little until you come up with the right answers later today. Avoid the social scene until tomorrow.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Decide what you want, but be sure your reasons are sound before you make plans today. Take care of odds and ends around the house which must be done first.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Friends are vital to your welfare now, but keep only those who will not upset you or the structure of your life in any way. Resist those who want to make you change.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Show that you are a good citizen and do nothing to spoil your good reputation today. Use particular care where credit is concerned and don't make any loans.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

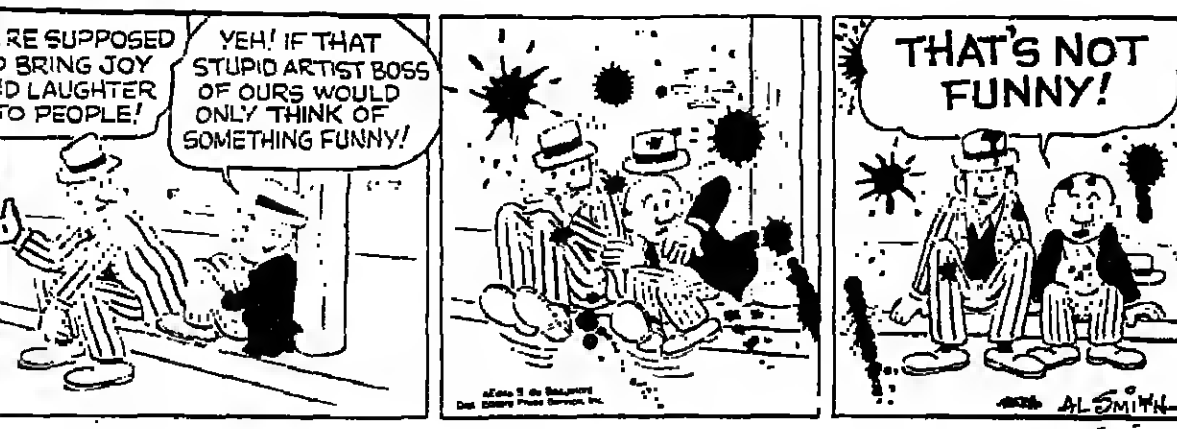
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Butt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF

By Glasbergen

"Did you get a good look at the chiropractor's credentials?"

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

INVEA

TALAN

HALIDA

SHORKE

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer: C O U N T

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: DAUNT POUND OCELOT IMPORT

Answer: What he liked to exercise most — HIS OPTION NOT TO

THE Daily Crossword

by Joan O. Berbrich

ACROSS

- Peace
- Pillages
- Pheasant or herb
- 14th-century novel
- "Gnomes" author
- Movie god
- 17th-century writer
- U.S. attorney general
- 20th-century general
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business daily beat

A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Number, volume of bouncing cheques hit the roof

★ OFFICIAL figures show that some 435,000 cheques bounced last year, compared to 350,800 cheques in 1993. The value of the bounced cheques in 1994 amounted to JD 372,100,000 compared to JD 306 million in the preceding year. As such an average of JD 2 million of cheques bounced every day last year. Banking sources attributed the ballooning number and volume of bouncing cheques to market recession, diminishing consumption, high prices and low income. The sources hinted that only a small portion of the bounced cheques was a result of deliberate action of fraud or the like by the drawer. A total of 7,942,200 cheques were presented for clearing last year, compared to 7,220,300 cheques in 1993. The volume was JD 9,996.3 million in 1994 compared to JD 9,768.7 million in 1993. Amman had the lion's share of cheques presented for clearing with 5,887,900 worth JD 9,068.2 million. Irbid was second (496,300 cheques for JD 344,100,000) and Zarqa came third (436,600 cheques for JD 777,500,000). Aqaba was in third place in terms of volume as 121,400 cheques for JD 306,500,000 were processed in the clearing system last year (Al Dustour).

theatrical watches air bans

★ Registered as a holding public shareholding company at the Ministry of Industry and Trade on Jan. 19, 1995, the newly established Specialised Investments Jordanian Company is offering one million shares, at JD 1 par value, for public subscription starting March 11 until March 30, 1995. The company, capitalised at JD 4 million, aims at administering affiliated firms and participating in the management of other companies. Other objectives include setting up, acquiring or investing in all types of companies as need be. The main founders from about 144 who invested a total of JD 3 million are: Jamil, Aref, and Ami Barakat (JD 100,000 each), Barakat General Trading Company (JD 10,000), Tharwat Al Baranathi (JD 100,000), Ra'd amoudi Salman (Iraqi — JD 100,000), Yassin Abbas alman (Iraqi — JD 10,000), Marwan Nobani D 100,000), Azmi Odeh M. Ousef (JD 100,000), the rah Bank, the Housing Bank and the Amman Bank r Investments (JD 100,000 each), the Jordan French Insurance and the Arabian Seas Insurance (JD 100,000 each), Jordan National Bank, Jordan Kuwait Bank, the rdan Gulf Bank and Busis Bank (JD 50,000 each), d the Orphans' Fund (JD 10,000). Only 25 per cent of share value is to be paid on subscribing with the rest to be paid over the next 10 years (Al Ra'i).

★ THE "investment window" at the Investment Encouragement Department employed three economic consultants to offer opportunities in the agricultural tourism and service sector in order to specify projects that can be put to an investor's discretion. The department aims at achieving a turnout of 270 projects during all the governorates Jordan (Al Ra'i).

★ CHARITABLE societies spent JD 698,654 in on productive and developmental projects they cement with self-financing with the participation of General Union of Voluntary Societies in cooperation other parties. Spending he 247 productive amounted to JD 376,360 the rest was spent on famine development, fairs, credit funds, kindergartens and hearing aids (Dustour).

Iraq outlines oil wealth to Western executives

BAGHDAD (R) — Oil Minister Safa Hadi Jawad told more than 250 energy specialists Saturday Iraq had giant undeveloped oilfields that could produce more than 4.5 million barrels per day (b/d).

"It must be explained here that more than 30 discovered and appraised oil fields with total production capacity of more than 4.5 million b/d are ready now for development," Mr. Jawad told an energy conference in the Iraqi capital, whose delegates included Western oil company officials.

"We are determined to utilise the country's huge hydrocarbon reserves to raise production commensurate with the size of these reserves," the minister said in an opening address.

On Friday, Mr. Jawad said Iraq is currently producing between 600,000 and 700,000 b/d and the country was ready to export two million b/d immediately once United Nations sanctions were lifted.

He said that Iraq, whose oil exports are blocked by the sanctions, possessed at least 112 billion barrels of proven reserves and 214 billion barrels of probable reserves.

Wide opportunities for exploring oil and gas in Iraq's western desert were available for foreign firms, he said.

"We welcome any company... it is very important for us to have the companies here for our production," the minister told a small group of reporters.

Mr. Jawad said Iraq also had reserves of 160 trillion cubic feet (4.53 trillion cubic metres) of gas reserves.

Oil company officials from 29 countries attending the conference said they were attracted by Iraq's vast potential.

"One day it will become possible to work again in this country," Mr. Christophe de Margerie, executive vice-president of French oil company Total said.

Mr. De Margerie said the company was prepared to invest "several billion dollars," in developing the Nahr Umar oil field in southern Iraq when U.N. sanctions were removed.

"We are looking at the opportunities here but we have not settled on specific fields," Salvatore Florida, acquisitions manager with Italian energy company AGIP said.

Mr. Jawad said Iraq would need between \$30 to \$40 billion to rebuild its oil industry. Some \$25 billion alone would be needed to revitalise oil fields and export facilities over the next five to eight years.

He said Iraq had started "serious discussions" over developing Nahr Umar and another field called Majnoon, which alone holds some 38 billion barrels.

French firms Total and Elf have reached tentative agreements with Baghdad to develop both fields as soon as the sanctions, imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, are lifted.

Foreign firms would only be entitled to recover "production costs and an interest on investment," he said, adding that the crude would "remain Iraq's," 100 per cent.

He said pressure was building at the U.N. Security Council for the lifting of U.N. trade sanctions and criticised the United States for trying to keep them intact.

"Those who still advocate the continuation of the embargo are running out of excuses," he said.

Mr. Jawad told OPEC member countries not to fear Iraq's return to markets, stressing that Baghdad would "approach the oil market with responsibility."

"Our return to the market should not be seen as a threat to anyone," he added.

Tunisia plans to enter Eurobond, U.S. markets

TUNIS (R) — Tunisia, which issued 25 billion yen in Samurais bonds in Tokyo last month, plans to enter other financial markets such as Eurobonds and the U.S. domestic market, its central bank (BCT) governor said.

The turn to other markets such as the Eurobond or the U.S. domestic market, or other instruments such as syndicated loans might be considered (in 1995), BCT Governor Mohammad Beji Hamda told Reuters.

"It would depend essentially on our financing needs and the conditions proposed to Tunisia for entering into these markets," he pointed out.

The BCT is issuing bonds worth 25 billion yen in 5.6 per cent Samurais priced at par and maturing on Feb. 28, 2000. It received a BBB rating by the Japan Bond Research Institute.

This is Tunisia's second international issue, the first being a similar Samurais bond issued last year in Tokyo.

"Tunisia has reached of development which makes it non-eligible for classical financial resources such as bilateral or multilateral aid," Mr. Beji Hamda said.

"Therefore it needs to mobilise resources for its needs on the international financial markets," he said.

Mr. Beji Hamda said the economic reforms Tunisia had implemented since 1987 with the support of the World Bank were successful.

Despite a drought and a decline in oil production, GDP growth was 4.4 per cent in 1994, up from 2.1 per cent in 1993, and is forecast to be 6.3 per cent in 1995, he said.

He said the freedom allowed to banks to set their own rates has not affected the dinar which had been stable.

Austrian housewives, grannies drain banks' dollar reserves

VIENNA (R) — Housewives, grannies and even schoolchildren have caught foreign exchange fever — breaking into their piggy banks to buy dollars that have never been so cheap.

Banks in Austria and Germany are reporting their dollar inventories are being drained by an unprecedented run on the beleaguered U.S. currency by an unlikely clientele — pimple-faced teenagers and grey-haired grandmothers.

Frantic dollar hunters are dashing from emptied bank to emptied bank, hoping to swap their Austrian schillings and German marks into dollars before it's too late. Some banks are trying to limit the amounts the hoarders can buy.

"Half the population of Vienna has been in here looking for dollars," said Rudolf Bucher, a manager at Creditanstalt's head office where there were no dollars to be had Friday.

"We're hoping to get some more in by the afternoon, but we can't make any promises," he said.

Banks in Austria and Germany said they were selling up to 30 times as many dollars in recent days as was usual.

Christian Manz, a senior official at Bank Austria, the country's largest bank, said daily volumes had multiplied to between \$20 million and \$30 million. He estimated that Austrians across the country were now buying \$350 million per day.

The dollar hit record lows against the schilling and mark on Wednesday — news that is being splashed over newspaper front pages and leading the evening television and radio newscasts.

"We had a group of 12-year-old boys in here this morning who put their pocket money together to buy \$20," Mr. Bucher said. "They had heard on the news that the dollar was so cheap and figured they had to buy some too."

Dollar hunters walk out with an average of between \$1,000 and \$20,000 in cash, bankers said. But they added some have taken as much as \$200,000 in cash out the front door.

"Austrians, especially older Austrians, have never seen the dollar so cheap and just can't resist buying it," said one banker in Vienna, who said he'd seen women older than 70 looking for dollars.

"A lot are planning holidays to the U.S. or countries where dollars are taken. But there are also some private speculators coming in here — even though the transaction fees and costs of holding the cash dollars make it very hard to make a profit," he added.

The dollar was trading at 1.41 marks Friday, already rebounding from record lows of 1.345 marks. Against the Austrian currency, the dollar was at 9.9 schillings, up from a low of 9.6.

"My father is in tears about the dollar being so low," said Natalie Lanzmann, a Vienna lawyer. "Something is wrong with the world when the dollar is worth less than 10 schillings."

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 11/03/1995				
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK PSC	340	64250	188.500	188.500
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	2050	9041	4.420	4.410
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK / NEW	10800	45684	4.230	4.230
STATE OF JORDAN	100	350	3.500	3.500
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	11350	20029	1.790	1.500
THE HOUSING BANK	3650	22149	6.090	6.060
JORDAN KIWAT BANK	2597	7788	3.000	3.000
JORDAN GULF BANK	7400	9175	1.220	1.250
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	15896	60743	3.830	3.790
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	1030	4200	4.050	4.000
RAIT ELMAL SAVINGS INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	2597	2308	3.120	3.070
ARAB BANK FOR INVESTMENT	74950	84889	1.200	1.140
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	17650	24172	1.430	1.360
BANKS SECTOR	150783	356735	INDEX NUMBER: 159.72	CHANGE: -0.33%
JORDAN INSURANCE	500	1700	3.400	3.400
ARABIAN SEAS INSURANCE	150	293	2.000	1.950
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	36100	90082	2.500	2.470
DELTA INSURANCE	250	475	1.810	1.900
INDUSTRY SECTOR	37000	92550	INDEX NUMBER: 136.56	CHANGE: -0.25%
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	8000	12630	1.570	1.570
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER / NEW	16300	24495	1.510	1.500
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	61972	30956	4.850	5.000
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	4816	16294	3.360	3.330
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	300	1925	6.420	2.100
HAZARDY EQUIP. RENTING & MAINTENANCE	1500	990	0.690	0.660
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & CONSUMER HOTELS	19182	44657	2.350	2.320
ARAB INTEL. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	1200	4194	3.540	3.490
SERVICES SECTOR	113930	415040	INDEX NUMBER: 130.97	CHANGE: -0.04%
JORDAN TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	200	6400	33.500	32.000
ATTAKBEEH CONST. MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	1200	1403	1.200	1.170
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	30332	90531	2.990	2.980
THE ARAB POTASH / NEW	200	1000	5.020	5.000
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	196	1847	9.440	9.410
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	950	3471	3.800	3.700
THE JORDAN WOODSTOCKS	4150	31413	7.590	7.550
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	25450	107487	4.380	4.160
THE JORDAN PAPER MANUFACTURING	3500	9450	2.700	2.700
RAPIA INDUSTRIES	950	2680	2.850	2.820
OKAR AL DANA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	8500	43856	7.970	7.970
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	10450	9646	0.940	0.990
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	650	4290	6.750	6.600
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	108850	77359	0.730	0.690
ARAB TRADING COMPANY & TRADING	15150	22119	1.420	1.380
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	1000	3800	3.830	3.750
JORDAN ROCKWOL INDUSTRIES	3400	3845	1.160	1.100
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MATCH / JINCO	11700	8317	0.740	0.700
JORDAN PAPER-CHRONICS	350	523	1.490	1.490
ARAB CENTER FOR FARM & CHEMICALS	1300	3299	2.570	2.510
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	4700	19278	4.140	4.090
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	2700	5460	2.060	2.010
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	233032	456855	INDEX NUMBER: 121.45	CHANGE: -0.90%
GRAND TOTAL	534745	1321179	INDEX NUMBER: 141.89	CHANGE: -0.49%
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET		78377		
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET		92332		

Financial Markets				
in cooperation with Cairo Amman Bank				
U.S. Dollar in International Markets				
Currency	New York Close	New York Close	New York Close	New York Close
	10/3/95	10/3/95	10/3/95	10/3/95
Sterling Pound	1.6091	1.5740		
Deutsche Mark	1.4610	1.4123		
Swiss Franc	1.1679	1.1797		
French Franc	4.7825	5.0455		
Japanese Yen	90.90	90.90		
European Currency Unit	1.3055	1.2968		
Source: 10/3/1995				
Currency	1 MYN	3 MYN	6 MYN	12 MYN
U.S. Dollar	5.87	6.00	6.25	6.64
Sterling Pound	8.18	6.50	6.87	6.62
Deutsche Mark	4.64	4.75	5.00	5.37
Swiss Franc	3.37	3.54	3.75	4.04
French Franc	6.81	6.87	6.75	6.75
Japanese Yen	2.06	2.00	2.00	2.00
European Currency Unit	1.31	7.25	7.25	7.37
Source: 10/3/1995				
Currency	USD/JPY	JPY/USD	USD/GBP	GBP/USD
Gold	382.25	7.55	Silver	4.69
Source: 10/3/1995				
Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin				
Date: 11/3/1995				
Currency	Bid	Offer		
U.S. Dollar	0.6190	0.6910		
Sterling Pound	1.0857	1.0891		
Deutsche Mark	0.4878	0.4902		
Swiss Franc	0.5846	0.5875		
French Franc	0.1364	0.1371		
Japanese Yen	0.7555	0.7593		
Dutch Guilder	0.4344	0.4366		
Swedish Krona	0.0409	0.0411		
Italian Lira	0.0409	0.0411		
Belgian Franc	0.0409	0.0411		
Source: 11/3/1995				
Currency	Bid	Offer		
Bahraini Dinar	1.4170	1.4280		
Lebanese Lira	0.041775	0.042950		
Saudi Riyal	0.1834	0.1843		
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3000	2.3500		
Omani Riyal	0.1834	0.1893		
Egyptian Pound	0.1850	0.2085		
Umani Riyal	1.7810	1.7930		
UAE Dirham	0.1878	0.2480		
Greek Drachma	0.2755	0.3145		
Cypriot Pound	1.4650	1.5500		
Source: 11/3/1995				

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Indoor Athletics Championship Ottey, Surin reign in Spain

BARCELONA (AFP) — Merlene Ottey and Bruny Surin both struck sprinting gold here on Friday to open the World Indoor Championship medal chase.

For the Jamaican, the 60m success was her 27th medal at a major championship since 1979, while Surin regained the short sprint title he won on home territory in Toronto in 1993.

But both admitted there was one big disappointment — the absence of their chief rivals, Linford Christie and Irina Privalova.

Britain's world and Olympic champion Linford Christie looked on in the stands as Surin, whose season last year was blighted by a knee injury, won a championship best of 6.46 seconds, ahead of Christie's compatriot Darren Braithwaite (6.51) and Robert Esmie of Canada (6.55).

Surin said: "There was more pressure this time but I ran the perfect race. But I would have preferred Christie to be here but he had his reasons."

Ottey, meanwhile, who

won in 6.97 seconds ahead of Melanie Paschke of Germany (7.10) and American Carlette Guidry, said: "There was just no pressure for me at all. I wish Privalova had run."

"I think I was trying to do too much and my second half wasn't as good as I wanted."

"I'll go for the double in Gothenburg (at the world outdoor championships in August) but I chose the 60 metre here because I have missed out twice and I wanted a 60-metre title before I retire — whenever that is!"

Neither looked in any trouble.

Silver medalist Braithwaite admitted: "There was nothing I could have done. His pick-up was better than mine, that was his class showing. It's my first major medal and I'm totally delighted."

The biggest loser of the day was another British sprinter, Michael Rosswess.

Drafted in to replace Christie after he decided at the 11th hour not to compete, Rosswess seemed to have qualified for the final only for medal hopes to disappear on

the toss of the coin.

But he accepted the decision with perfect sportsmanship. "That's life," he said after he calling heads only for tails to gift a final place to German Marc Blume, who went on to finish fifth.

Rosswess had run a semi-final time of 6.618 and had originally been named as one of the final eight but then it was announced that Blume had clocked a time just one thousandth of a second slower — meaning that under IAAF rules a coin should decide who ran in the final.

Privalova, meanwhile, was giving the rest of the 400 metre field an early warning of her intentions.

In her first individual outing over the distance in a major event, the Russian double European sprint champion looked imperious as she coasted to a 52.78 heat win.

As she had predicted, she went out fast and then jogged in over the final straight. World champion Jearl Miles of the USA went faster, winning her run in 52.48 but she must have been impressed by Privalova's form. Reigning champion Sandie Richards of Jamaica also qualified comfortably.

The psychological coup of the day was scored by Geir Moen, Norway's sprinting pin-up who won the European 200 metre title last year when world silver medalist John Regis had to cry off with an Achilles injury.

Regis, looking for revenge, was left to gaze at Moen's disappearing back in their semi-final. Moen clocking 20.59 to the British runner's 20.94.

Moen, an unknown until his Helsinki success, had almost goaded Regis before their first meeting, saying: "I am glad he is here — I want to beat the bet."

The other medals of the day went to Finn Mika Hal-



U.S. Athlete Jearl Miles (centre) on her way to clocking 52.48 seconds in her 400 metre qualifying run (AFP photo)

vari, who won the men's shot for his first major international success with an effort of 20.74 metre ahead of C.J. Hunter of the United States (20.58) and Dragan Peric of Yugoslavia (20.36).

Russia's Svetlana Moskalets, meanwhile, won the

pentathlon with a final total of 4,834 points ahead of American Kym Carter (4,632) and fellow Russian Irina Tyukbay (4,622).

Moskalets based her triumph on victories in the 60 metre hurdles, the high and

long jumps.

In another performance of note, new American 400 metre sensation Darnell Hall led Sunday Bada of Nigeria, the silver medalist from Toronto, from the gun to win his opening heat in 46.32.

Victory Team wins Dubai Rally

ABU DHABI (AP) — Khalifa Al-Mataywi gave Dubai's Victory Rally Team a flying start to the 1995 FIA Middle East Championship here Friday with an overwhelming win in the U.A.E. International Rally.

It is the first leg of the seven-round championship to be staged in other Middle East countries over the next few months.

Mataywi, an overnight leader from the first of the two days of this 634 kilometre event, reached the finish in Abu Dhabi in his victory Toyota Celica GT-4 with a 22-minute edge over the Group N Mitsubishi Galant VR-4 of Tanzanian Sadiq Fazal, who is based in the United States Arab Emirates.

Abu Dhabi's Salem Bin Shehan in a fort Escort Cosworth celebrated his debut rally by taking third place. British driver Howard Paterson finished fourth and topped the Formula Two category for two-wheel drive cars in a Volkswagen Golf GTI.

He was followed by the Peugeot of Australian Ron Cremen and Britain's Simon Nutter, and the sole female driver, Fiona Udale.

After holding second position in his Mazda 323 for most of the second leg, Kuwait's Mohammad Al-Housaini was one of five drivers excluded at the end of the final 14th stage for failing to follow the rally route.

Also excluded were Peter Cherry, who had been holding fourth place in a Mitsubishi, Kuwait's Sabah Al Anzi (Volvo 344) Great Britain's Siegfried Steur in a Group A Toyota Corolla, and Nike Mandrides in a Group A Land Rover. Cherry and Mandrides are U.A.E.-based.

Leading Middle East Championship positions:

- 1- K. Al-Mataywi, 20 points
- 2- S. Fazal, 15
- 3- S. Shehan, 12
- 4- H. Paterson, 10
- 5- R. Cremen, 8
- 6- S. Nutter, 6
- 7- F. Udale, 4

Jansher fights to reach final

LISBON (AFP) — World squash champion Jansher Khan had to battle for 77 minutes, packed with grueling rallies, to subdue young Scotsman Peter Nicol in the Portuguese Open semifinals on Friday.

Nicol was the last man to win against the near invincible Pakistani in a world circuit match, 13 months ago in the Leekes Welsh Classic, in Cardiff.

For quite a while, Nicol, a more improved player since then, looked thoroughly capable of repeating that success and the scores, 15-10, 5-15, 15-9, 15-6, did not flatter him.

It was only over the last half a dozen points or so that Jansher, tactically so crafty and such a master at using his long reach in defending, was able to exert complete authority.

The sphere of play in which Nicol, a former British junior champion, looked so improved since last year was in the front court. He played drop shots with alacrity against a master of the short game, often with telling effect.

The stage where the match started to swing in favour of Jansher was at 5-5 in the third game, when Nicol struck a short patch of tiredness and made three unforced errors in a row.

Nicol's touch returned thereafter, but Jansher had achieved a position of strength which he would not then relinquish.

British Open set to change

This month's British Open Squash Championship is to fall into line with other major men's tournaments by adopting the American scoring system and a lower, 17-inch tin.

Under the American system, each rally counts for a point and each game is won by the player first reaching 15 points. For the past 65 years, the British Open has been scored to nine points with points scored only by the server.

Professional Squash Association tournaments have followed the American system since 1988. But the conservative Squash Rackets Association, the ruling body for the English game, has previously clung to tradition.

The tin has traditionally been two inches higher, at 19 inches.

Sainz wins Portuguese Rally

FIGUEIRA DA FOZ, Portugal (AFP) — Spain's Carlos Sainz notched his second victory of the season, when he won a thrilling finish to the Portuguese Rally at the wheel of a Subaru Impreza.

Sainz beat another former world champion, Juha Kankkunen, by 12secs — despite the Flying Finn having started the third and final day 22sec ahead in a Toyota Celica.

The two men fought a tremendous duel in the final 24 hours, the rest of the field having already been consigned to the role of spectators.

Sainz's Scottish teammate Colin McRae came third, 3min 14sec off the pace.

The Spaniard, world champion in 1990 and 1992 and who this season's opener at Monte Carlo, now leads the world championship after three races.

Friday's victory was his second on Portuguese soil, after winning in 1991.

Despite the strong finish by the Subaru, Mitsubishi remain on top of the constructors' standings.

The next round of the championship is the Tour of Corsica from May 3-5.

Device may help warn boxers of brain injuries

BALTIMORE (AP) — "A device" smaller than a cigarette pack could be a boxer's best weapon against the type of injury that ended Gerald McClellan's career and nearly his life, scientists at Johns Hopkins University say.

The device, called an "accelerometer," is part of an ongoing study of what happens to the brain when a fighter receives an uppercut, a left jab or a right cross to the head.

About a half-dozen amateur fighters have worn helmets fitted with the accelerometer during sparring. The device records head motion in three directions and stores the information on a computer memory card, said Nick Jones, associate professor of civil engineering at Hopkins and the device's designer.

A printout looks like a seismic reading during an

earthquake. Head blows, which can take less than one-tenth of a second, show up as spikes.

But scientists don't know yet what damage the head blows cause.

During the next step of the study, amateur boxers wearing the accelerometer will be given brain scans before and after sparring.

"It will enable us to understand a lot about head injury because we are going to be recording cause and effect," Jones said.

McClellan is recovering at a London hospital after surgeons removed a huge blood clot which formed in his brain during a fight Feb. 25 against British boxer Nigel Benn. He spent 11 days on life support.

The severity of the injury has raised concerns that boxing should be banned — a position supported by the American Medical Association,

which states the primary purpose of the sport is to inflict injury.

Hopkins scientists recently completed an eight-year study funded by the U.S. Olympic Committee and the national institutes of health in which it looked at brain function of 484 amateur boxers between the ages of 13 and 21 in Washington, Houston, Cleveland, St. Louis, New York City and the Lake Charles area of Louisiana.

Neuropsychological tests gave activity found no evidence that amateur boxing impairs brain functioning, but left open the possibility that repeated, jarring blows could result in brain damage.

Scientists just have to look at pro fighters suffering from dementia pugilistica, or "punch drunk syndrome" to know that boxing causes brain damage, said Dr. Wal-

ter Stewart, one of the key Hopkins scientists involved in the accelerometer study.

Stewart said scientists know from studying rats that if the head is spun quickly, the connection between brain cells and chemical transmitters can be sheared. It takes 60 to 90 days for the body to repair itself but in some cases brain cells die when the damage is too great.

The accelerometer could lead to safety advances in professional boxing, similar to when gloves with thumb sensors were banned after Sugar Ray Leonard suffered a detached retina in 1981 during a fight against Thomas Hearns, said Stephen B. Acunto, founder of the American Association for the Improvement of Boxing and a commissioner with the New York State Athletic Commission.

Graf, Martinez in Delray Beach semis

DELRAY BEACH (AFP) — Top-seeded Steffi Graf reached the semi-finals of the Delray Beach Winter Championships without hitting a ball on Friday, while Conchita Martinez had to fight her way past tenacious Kristie Boogert.

Graf, who has won this event for the past three years and five times in all, was handed a semi-final berth when Barbara Rittner pulled out. She was the 10th player to withdraw because of injury or illness.

"It's pretty amazing this many players pulling out," said Graf. "It's very disappointing. I would have preferred to play."

Graf played an exhibition set with Jana Novotna, one of the walking wounded with a shoulder injury, winning it 6-1.

Meanwhile Martinez was struggling to pull off a 6-4, 7-6 (9/7) against her unseeded Dutch opponent.

She trailed 4-6 in the tiebreaker before regaining the upper hand. She pushed Boogert into losing her last five service points, but the 21-year-old was happy with the experience.

"Once I start to play these top players I'll get to know them and what they do on important points," she said. "I lost to the number four player in the world. That's not a bad loss, and it was even a close match."

But now Martinez is in danger of joining the massive injured list. She withdrew

from her doubles sore hip, but was expected to play fourth-seeded Brenda Schultz in the semis on Saturday.

"Hopefully, I'm going to play tomorrow," she said. "I probably could have forced it, but it was too dangerous."

Sampras defeats Rafter

Top seed Pete Sampras squandered two match points in the second set but bore down to defeat 15th seed Patrick Rafter of Australia 6-4 6-7 (8-10) 6-1 in the third round of the \$1,800,000 Newsweek Champions Cup.

Sampras, ranked number one in the world, had match points at 6-5 and 8-7 in the second-set tiebreak, but the 22nd-ranked Rafter answered with a service winner the first time and an ace the second.

TENNIS ROUNDUP

on Friday.

Fourteenth seed Thomas Muster of Austria saved three match points and upset fourth-seeded Michael Chang 6-1 5-7 7-6 (7-3) in another third-round match at the 56-player, hard court tournament.

Third seed Boris Becker of Germany was in complete control of his third-round match when unseeded Marcelo Rios of Chile had to retire at 6-3 3-2 with a strained left hip muscle.

Eighth-seeded Todd Martin won a battle of big serves over fellow American David Wheaton 7-6 (7-5) 4-6 7-5 in a contest that saw 19 aces from Martin and 14 from Wheaton with just two double faults from each.

Quarterfinals pairings pit Sampras against Martin.

seventh seed Wayne Ferreira of South Africa against second seed Andre Agassi. Muster against 11th seed Stefan Edberg of Sweden, and Becker against 12th-seeded Swede Magnus Larsson, who beat sixth seed Michael Stich of Germany 5-7 7-6 (8-6) 7-6 (7-5).

Sampras, ranked number one in the world, had match points at 6-5 and 8-7 in the second-set tiebreak, but the 22nd-ranked Rafter answered with a service winner the first time and an ace the second.



Arantxa Sanchez

points that saw long baseline rallies typical of the match. The courts are slow and both players like to play the baseline.

Chang reached match

point again on Muster's serve at 6-5 in the third set, but Muster responded this time with a backhand winner and ultimately forced a tiebreak.

Muster, known for playing

relentlessly on every point, jumped out to a 5-2 lead in the tiebreak by pinning the American to the baseline with heavy topspin shots, finally winning the tiebreak 7-3.

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Team Win Rally

Orlando clinch playoff berth

ORLANDO (R) — The Orlando Magic became the first NBA team to clinch a playoff berth on Friday, but this time around, they're smiling a lot higher.

Shaquille O'Neal scored 26 points and grabbed 15 rebounds to lead the Magic, who have never won a playoff game, past the Portland Trail Blazers 97-85.

"Last year it was nice with the streamers and all because it was our first time but we have much loftier goals this year," said Orlando coach Brian Hill.

Orlando (47-14) has the best record in the NBA and increased its lead to seven games over New York in the Atlantic Division. Orlando is a league-best 31-1 at home.

"I think everyone's kind of spoiled this year," guard Anfernee Hardaway said. "From having the best record in the best record in the NBA and clinching a spot, I think the only thing that's on their (the fans') minds is winning the entire thing."

Hardaway had 20 points and Nick Anderson 22.

Otis Thorpe had 21 points to lead Portland, which played without starting point guard Rodrick Trickett (sore right shoulder).

In Chicago, the Bulls overcame the distractions of the possible return of Michael Jordan to roll to a 99-76 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Toni Kukoc scored 19 points to lead a balanced attack in Chicago's first game since the Jordan rumours started swirling. Jordan quit baseball on Friday, and the former Bulls superstar has worked out with the team at their past two practices.

The win snapped Chicago's five-game losing streak against Cleveland, which was led by Tyrone Hill's 13 points.

In Phoenix, Rick Smits scored 22 points and Mark Jackson and Derrick McKey had 21 apiece as the Indiana Pacers upset the Suns 112-97. Charles Barkley scored 19

for the Suns, who fell one game behind Orlando for the best record in the league. Phoenix point guard Kevin Johnson pulled a groin muscle in the first quarter and did not return.

In Boston, Kenny Anderson scored 21 points and Derrick Coleman added 20 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists to lead the New Jersey Nets to their most lopsided victory ever over the Celtics, 111-81.

The Nets moved past Boston into the final Eastern Conference playoff berth. Their three-game win streak equals their longest of the season.

Erie Montross scored 21 points to lead Boston, which has lost three straight.

In Baltimore, Todd Day scored 26 points as the Milwaukee Bucks ended a three-game slide, 114-111 over the Washington Bullets.

Marty Conlon started for the injured Glenn Robinson (hip pointer) and scored 20 points as the Bucks remained 2½ games behind the Nets for the final Eastern playoff spot.

In Atlanta, Ken Norman scored 11 of his 25 points during a 21-2 first-half run and the Hawks set a franchise record with 14 3-pointers in a 108-81 rout of the New York Knicks.

Mookie Blaylock scored 27 points for Atlanta, which matched its season low in points allowed and reached 500 (30-30) for the first time this season.

John Starks's 17 points led the Knicks, who had a four-game winning streak snapped.

At Utah, Karl Malone scored 22 points and Jeff Hornacek added 19 as the Jazz beat the Sacramento Kings 110-93.

Mitch Richmond scored 19 for the Kings, who have lost 10 of their last 11 games and lead Denver by just 1½ games in the race for the final Western Conference playoff berth.

At Detroit, rookie Jalen Rose had 20 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists and Rodney Rogers added 19 points and a career-high 21 rebounds to lead the Denver Nuggets to a 99-88 victory over the Pistons.

Denver led by as many as 25 points in the fourth quarter, but then had to hold off a furious Pistons' rally. Detroit hit 10 straight baskets in a 27-4 run to pull within 83-81 with 6:13 remaining but Denver scored the next seven points.

Allan Houston scored a career-high 36 points, 22 in the fourth quarter, for Detroit.

In Philadelphia, David Robinson had 33 points, 12 rebounds and five blocks to lead the San Antonio Spurs to their 10th win in 11 games, 100-94 over the 76ers.

Avery Johnson added 23 points and eight assists.

Dana Barros scored 24 points and Clarence Weatherspoon 22 for Philadelphia, which has lost 11 of its last 14.

At Minnesota, Isaiah Rider returned from a four-game absence to score 33 points as the Timberwolves ended a three-game losing streak, 109-103 over the Los Angeles Lakers.

RESULTS	
Atlanta	108
New Jersey	111
Orlando	97
San Antonio	100
Milwaukee	114
Denver	99
Minnesota	109
Chicago	99
Indiana	112
Utah	110
LA Clippers	121
New York	81
Boston	81
Portland	85
Philadelphia	94
Washington	111
Detroit	88
LA Lakers	103
Cleveland	76
Phoenix	97
Sacramento	93
Golden State	102

NBA champions unsettled

HOUSTON (AP) — What's wrong with the Houston Rockets? Everyone on the National Basketball Association team is trying to solve the riddle and guard Kenny Smith won't disagree with any of the theories.

"It would be hard to disagree with any critique right now, everything seems to be wrong," Smith said. "The rocket's once-proud defence regularly allows 100-plus points, they fade in the fourth quarter, they've lost five in a row and they're growing through games trying to get acquainted with new teammates."

Hakeem Olajuwon is still the foundation but even he has shown signs of wear, drawing a rare technical foul and fouling out of the latest loss to the Phoenix Suns. "We realise there is a bigger picture and we're still putting in the colours," Smith said. "We've got the blue put on but there's orange, red and green still to put on the canvas."

By any analogy, the Rockets are far removed from the clutch performers who scratched their way to the NBA title last season.

Houston has a 35-24 record going into the game against the Dallas Mavericks, compared to 42-17 through 59 games last season when the Rockets had a franchise-high 58-24 mark.

The Rockets made a bold stroke on Feb. 14 by trading Otis Thorpe to the Portland Trail Blazers and brought home Olajuwon's college pal Clyde Drexler.

But since the trade, the Rockets are 6-7 and have shown the ability to lose to bad teams as well as the elite. They've been outscored in the fourth quarter of each game in their losing streak.

Coach Rudy Tomjanovich is responding by sending his players to the film room.

"We've got to do a lot of tape work," Tomjanovich said. "It's hard. I hated that as a player because no one likes seeing his mistakes. But we've got to do it."

The Rockets traded Thorpe's muscle for Drexler's speed and the adjustment is not complete.

The Rockets have had three days to work out the Kinks since Tuesday night's 113-102 loss to the Suns. Heating up defensive intensity has been the theme this week.

Jordan Times
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CONVENTIONS? HARDLY EVER

Both vulnerable, North deals.
NORTH
♠ 10 8 4
♥ 10 8 6 2
♦ 10
♣ A J

WEST EAST
♠ K 3 ♠ 9 6
♥ A 3 ♥ Q 7 2
♦ A Q 6 5 2 ♦ 9 4 2
♣ K Q 7 2 ♣ 10 8 5 4

SOUTH
♠ A J 7 2
♥ K 10 5
♦ K 7
♣ K 3

The bidding:
North East South West

1♣ Pass 1♦ 2NT
3♠ Pass 4♠ Pass
Opening lead: King of ♠
High on the list of conventions to show without a perfect bidding is the Unusual No Trump. If you employ it and don't buy the contract, you have given declarer so much information about the distribution that the hand can often be played as if all the cards are face up on the table. This example is from rubber bridge.

With both opponents bidding, West would have been wise to stay out of the auction until the strength of the North-South holding was clarified. If the auction died at a low

level, West could always back in. But with the Unusual No Trump in your arsenal, most players cannot resist wheeling it out at every occasion.

The opening club lead was won in dummy and the ten of spades was passed around to West's king. West cashed the queen of clubs and ace of diamonds to complete the defensive book, then exited with a diamond. A gun possible declarer at a trick one!

West, who had always back in. But with the Unusual No Trump in your arsenal, most players cannot resist wheeling it out at every occasion. The opening club lead was won in dummy and the ten of spades was passed around to West's king. West cashed the queen of clubs and ace of diamonds to complete the defensive book, then exited with a diamond. A gun possible declarer at a trick one!

Asian U-18 Basketball Championship

Jordan clinches 3rd place, qualifies for World Championship

By Omar Bashtawi
in Manila and
Alec Bannayan in Amman

"WE ARE IN WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS!"

THIS was the only statement Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) officials could utter holding back tears after the Kingdom's under-18 team Saturday defeated Thailand 62-56 to clinch third place in the Asian junior basketball competition to qualify for the world championships.

The Jordanian team's history-making win made them the Kingdom's first athletic team to represent Asia in a world championship as they will join four time Asian champions, Chi-



Jordan's victorious U-18 team returns home Wednesday with Asian bronze medals

Minister of Youth Awad Khalaf Saturday sent a cable of congratulations to His Majesty King Hussein following the U-18 basketball team's third place finish and qualification to the world championship.

He said the team's players dedicated the victory to His Majesty in appreciation of his continued encouragement and support of sports, particularly basketball. He added that the team was the first in the Kingdom's history to get an Asian medal and qualify for a world championship finals in team sports.

na and 1995 winners South Korea, in the championships which will be held in Greece in July.

South Korea upset favourites and titleholders China 55-48 in the final match Saturday.

The only Arab team in the 15 nation tournament, the relatively inexperienced Jordanian team (who were only regrouped 2 months ago) were playing

their first international competition. But they fared well and even upset all-time Asian basketball greats such as the Philippines, Thailand and Japan. The team only lost to China and South Korea.

Thus, they earned the respect of fellow players and coaches and became heroes for sports fans following their impressive results here at home.

As the 13th Asian U-18 championship concluded Saturday, the Jordanian team wrapped up their participation with five wins and three defeats. They beat Hong Kong 71-24 and Singapore 88-35 before losing 75-61 to South Korea to finish second in their group

and move to the quarterfinals. In that round they only lost to China 88-49, but scored a spectacular 72-71 win over hosts the Philippines and beat Japan 73-56 to move to the semi-finals. They lost 69-51 to South Korea in the semifinals.

On Saturday, the Jordanian team were determined to win in their final match as they ended the first half 26-23 and took a 51-36 early lead in the second half.

However the team's coaches and JBF officials were worried when top scorers Zeid Alkhas and Ma'an Odeh earned their fifth personal fouls ruling them out of the game.

With Ashraf Samara missing the match because of

injury, Ihab Emsih took on the burden of scoring together with Samer Nino, Fadi Al Saqqa, and Mahmoud Sha'ban. Nino and Emsih scored from crucial free throws that kept Jordan's lead and enabled them to take third place and earn the tournament's bronze medals.

The team's top scorers were: Zeid Alkhas 17, Ihab Emsih 15, Ma'an Odeh 10.

The JBF's president Awad Haddad and Vice President Samir Janakat dedicated the victory "to His Majesty King Hussein and to the Jordanian people."

The team's coaches Murad Barakat and Imad Al Saeed said: "This is a

big achievement for Jordan. The players earned this victory. Congratulations to all Jordanians."

Team captain Zeid Alkhas, who won the tournament's best defensive player award, added: "It is a great feeling. I'm very proud to see the Jordanian flag raised in this championship as we are so far away from home. We trained hard and won. The JBF is to be congratulated for their effort."

A tearful JBF secretary Ghalib Balawi could only say: "It is a fabulous achievement. An important comeback for Jordanian basketball."

The team will be back in Amman on Wednesday.

Bobek takes lead; Russians retain ice dance title

BIRMINGHAM (AP) — Everyone knew that Nicole Bobek had the kind of free-spirit attitude it takes to shake off adversity.

But no one anywhere could have predicted that the 17-year-old "wild child" from Chicago would be just steps away from a world title.

Bobek, unheralded on the world scene, pulled a stunning upset Friday to win the women's short programme at the World Figure Skating Championships. She did it with beautiful spirals, solid jumps, a winning school-girl

smile — and nerves of steel.

Dressed in white with gold sequins, Bobek was the epitome of grace and style as she glided across the ice at the NEC Arena. Her performance was judged better than the brute athleticism of five-time European champion Surya Bonaly.

There was no such surprise in the ice dance, in which defending champions Oksana

Grischuk and Yegeny Platov of Russia took the gold again with a Red Astaire-Ginger Rogers-style free dance. The silver went to Susanna Rahkamo and Petri Kokko of Finland, while Sophie Moniotte and Pascal Lavanchy of France won the bronze.

Even though there was only one flaw in her 2½-minute programme — she

scrapped a toe at the end of her combination jump — Bobek all but leaped off the kiss-and-cry coach in amazement as the marks were announced: six 5.9s for presentation and first place on six of the nine judges' cards.

The gold is within her grasp in she can give the same kind of effort in the free skate Saturday.

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Discussions advance proposal for Mideast development bank

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Two days of meetings in Washington have brought ideas together on the Jordanian proposal to create a regional bank for development and economic cooperation in the Middle East and the establishment of the bank would be announced at the Amman economic summit scheduled to be held in October.

Statements from Jawad Anani, who headed the Jordanian delegation to the talks, as well as the U.S. State Department indicated that the discussions had reached an advanced stage.

Dr. Anani, Jordan's former information minister and a key figure in the Kingdom's peace negotiations with Israel, was quoted as saying in the local press that the U.S. was suggesting a capital of \$5 billion for the proposed bank.

The bank is seen as vital to regional economic development in that it will extend easy-term loans. This is of key significance to the development of the Jordan Rift Valley, where projects worth billions of dollars have been drawn up in consultations with the U.S. administration.

The idea of a regional development bank was first formally proposed at the Casablanca economic summit in October 1994, when Jordan also unveiled regional and national projects estimated to cost about \$18 billion.

Most of those ideas are being debated behind the

scenes while others have been initiated and it is expected that some of the proposals would be crystallised at the Amman meeting.

U.S. President Bill Clinton, in a speech to the Jordanian Parliament on Oct. 26 after the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, announced that his administration was contributing \$75 million to the capital of the proposed bank.

The European Union (EU) was initially reported to be sceptical about the idea but changed its mind and actively took part in a meeting in Washington in January on the subject.

Some of the Gulf states which have the resources to contribute capital to the bank have been reportedly lukewarm to the idea and have sent conflicting signals. However, diplomats say, the oil-rich countries would be eventually convinced of the importance of their participation in the project.

Reporting the Washington meeting, the State Department said Friday that financial and foreign affairs officials from 31 "regional and extra regional parties" attended the March 9 and 10 talks on "financing institutions for economic development in the Middle East and North Africa."

Technically the meeting was of a task force that was set up early this year at a similar gathering in Washington to pursue the idea of regional economic development and cooperation in the Middle East, with the prop-

osal to set up a bank as the centre-piece.

"We are on track to produce detailed recommendations for political level decisions on new institutional arrangements by the Amman economic summit in October 1995," said a State Department statement carried by the United States Information Agency (USIA).

The statement said Jordan, Israel, Egypt and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) made "joint and individual presentations in support of their 1994 proposal for a new regional bank for economic cooperation and development."

Dr. Anani, quoted in the Al-Dustour daily, said Amman would host the next meeting of the task force on April 2 and the four sides were planning to present a joint proposal on the regional bank.

According to Dr. Anani, the Washington meeting also studied working papers by the United States and the European Union (EU) on their vision of financing regional economic development projects and special arrangements for easy-term loans through the proposed bank.

"It was clear at the meeting that the positions of the U.S. and the European Union were close to each other and the final proposal would lead to the establishment of the bank," Dr. Anani reportedly told the paper.

He added that a committee would be set up at the level of ministers or deputy ministers

to formulate the general policies of economic development and this committee would meet every month until the bank is physically created.

According to Dr. Anani, only three members of the 15-nation EU failed to agree with a common EU approach in support of the proposal to set up the bank; these were Italy, Holland and Greece. It was not immediately clear why the three had reservations over the project.

The rest of the EU members asked that they be given more time to study the details of the proposal and they are expected to give an affirmative answer either at the April 2 meeting in Amman or the meeting after that. Dr. Anani was quoted as saying, "Attending the meeting along with Dr. Anani were Faysal Tarawneh, Jordan's ambassador to the United States, Ministry of Planning Secretary-General Nabil Ammari and Central Bank Governor Michel Maro."

The State Department said that "in addition to discussing a detailed proposal for a bank with an integrally related economic policy dialogue forum, the group discussed a proposal for a one-bank institution to promote policy dialogue and project preparation."

"The discussions were substantive and held in a collaborative spirit. Many participants emphasised the significant degree of complementarity and convergence among the ideas put forward."

2 dead in collapse

RESCUE UNITS remove the body of a dead worker from a nearly-five-metre-deep ditch that caved in early Saturday. Two workers were killed and another — all of them Egyptian nationals — was wounded in the incident that occurred in a street off Gardens Street (see story on page 3) (Photo by Rana Hussein)



Qatar asks what more Iraq has to do to end sanctions

DOHA (Agencies) — Qatar's foreign minister said Saturday his country was "pained" by the U.N. embargo on Iraq and asked what more was required of Baghdad for the sanctions to be lifted.

Sheikh Hamad Bin Jasim Al Thani, who made his comments in a joint news conference with his Iraqi counterpart, said his country would continue to observe the sanctions, imposed on Iraq after its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"But we are pained by the embargo and its effects for the Iraqi people, and we want to know what more remains and what exactly is required of Iraq and which it has yet to implement," said Sheikh Jasim. "In reality we are perplexed. We need explanation."

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Saad Al Sahaf arrived here on Friday in a

surprise visit — the first by a senior Iraqi official to a Gulf Arab country that supported Kuwait during the crisis.

Baghdad has been calling for the sanctions to be lifted, arguing that it has complied with U.N. resolutions.

The United States and Britain are adamant that the sanctions remain in place, but three other permanent members of the Security Council — France, Russia, and China — have signalled a willingness to ease up on the punitive measures.

Russia's deputy foreign minister, Victor Posavayuk, arrived in Qatar Saturday on the first leg of a Gulf tour that will take him also to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, to sound them out on the sanctions issue.

He said Moscow "sees it as necessary that there should be positive action by the Security Council," which is scheduled to meet Monday to

review the embargo.

Mr. Sahaf said the oil embargo, which has deprived Baghdad of its main source of revenue, should be lifted in line with U.N. Security Council decisions that linked the blockade to the destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and the activation of a system for monitoring its military industry.

In an interview with the daily Al Raya published Saturday Mr. Sahaf also called for reconciliation among Arab countries which have been divided since Kuwait's invasion.

Mr. Sahaf said Iraq backed Egypt's campaign against Israel's nuclear arsenal and Arab threats to suspend their commitment to the international Non-Proliferation Treaty until Israel agrees to sign.

(Continued on page 7)

Rabbani forces seize Taliban positions

KABUL (Agencies) — Government forces launched a full-scale attack on Saturday on positions newly occupied by the Taliban student militia in the southwest of the Afghan capital Kabul on Saturday, witnesses said.

Forces loyal to President Besharuddin Rabbani used helicopter gunships, jet fighters and heavy artillery as they moved into some of the Karte Seh district's frontline areas seized earlier by the Taliban from the opposition Shi'ite Muslim Hezb-e-Wahdat faction, the witnesses said.

It was not immediately clear how much territory was captured by the troops.

Government aircraft bombed a Taliban base at Charasayah outside Kabul, aid workers said.

There was no immediate estimate of casualties.

A Taliban commander told reporters the powerful militia had taken over all Wahdat positions in Karte Seh district on Friday night.

Commander Mullah Mohammad Ghous said the Taliban were maintaining their defensive positions. Thousands of civilians were fleeing to south of Kabul as government troops were seen looting abandoned homes.

The push seemed aimed at winning more territory after Wahdat, hard-pressed by a government offensive, agreed to hand over its frontlines to the Taliban, who says they want to end the factional fighting in the war-ravaged country.

"We are very angry with Rabbani and his people, they are not a legitimate government," Mr. Ghous told reporters at Charasayah.

Mr. Rabbani has been trying to gain control of southern Kabul since last weekend when his forces launched a three-day offensive that killed as many as 100 people and wounded several hundred more.

A United Nations peace plan has called for Mr. Rabbani to hand over power to a multiparty council on March 21.

Mr. Rabbani has rejected the deadline unless the Taliban also participate in the council.

Iraq calls on feuding Kurds to hold talks

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraq on Saturday launched a fresh appeal for feuding Kurdish factions to hold talks and rid themselves of U.S.-allied protection.

"You have to seize this opportunity and free yourselves of the American grip," the official Al-Jumhuriyah newspaper told the Kurds, adding that "counting on the United States will lead to failure."

"After the sanctions are lifted you will no longer have a place in the country and your American allies will abandon you," the paper added.

The call came on the anniversary of a law adopted in 1974 granting self-rule to the provinces of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah in Iraq's Kurdistan.

The Kurds have controlled the region in defiance of Baghdad and set up their own parliament since launching an abortive rebellion after the January-February 1991 Gulf war. The Kurdish-held area is protected by an allied air force based in Turkey.

Iraqi President Saddam

Hussein in January offered to mediate between the rival Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which have been locked in a bitter power struggle for several months, but the offer was turned down.

Hundreds have died in the clashes and the PUK has accused Iraqi government troops of shelling a Kurdish-held area — a charge denied by Baghdad.

Iraq on Friday categorically denied the Kurdish accusations that its army was shelling Kurdish areas.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Saad Al Sahaf told the official Qatari agency (QNA) on his arrival in Doha: "There is no movement of Iraqi troops to the north and no shelling by the Iraqi army of the Kurdish area."

The PUK said Thursday that Iraqi government troops had pounded a Kurdish town in northern Iraq with heavy artillery on Wednesday killing one civilian and wounding

(Continued on page 7)

Algerian paper says GIA behind bombing

ALGIERS (Agencies) — A car bomb attack on an Algerian police housing complex which wounded 63 people was carried out by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), a newspaper said here Saturday.

The GIA, the most hard-line of Algeria's extremist groups, is using a specialised network of "young faucons" to carry out car bomb attacks. La Tribune newspaper said. The paper is generally well-informed on Islamic armed groups.

The group, all under the age of 22, call themselves Al Moukounne Bi Dam (Signatures with blood) said the paper, generally well-informed on Algeria's extremist fundamentalist groups.

The network is led by Lounes Bahlouli, known as Ayoub, a 32-year-old sentenced to death in absentia for his part in a bomb attack on Algiers international airport, the newspaper said.

That attack, in August 1992, killed nine people and injured 128.

Friday's attack on the housing complex followed a warning from the group threatening to attack women linked to the security forces, and appeared to mark a new escalation in the three-year terror campaign aimed at ousting the military-backed government.

It was the first attack of its size against a specifically civilian target, bousing women and children. Eight children were among the wounded.

The bomb attack, which has not been claimed, blew up between two buildings on the Gardi estate for police officers and their families, which is surrounded by a high perimeter wall topped with barbed wire.

The estate is in the working-class suburb of Kouba, a fundamentalist stronghold.

In a statement published by the London-based Arab newspaper Al Hayat, the GIA said the group had set Friday as a deadline for the authorities to free all Islamist women they were holding and abandon legal proceedings against them.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Crown Prince congratulates team

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Saturday sent a cable to the Under-18 national basketball team congratulating its members for winning the third place in the Asian championship which concluded Saturday in the Philippines. The national team scored a 62-56 win over Thailand which won the fourth place. The first and second places went to China and South Korea respectively. (see page 11).

Japanese evening held in Amman

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Princess Sarvath Al Hassan on Saturday attended a Japanese evening organised by the Japanese embassy in cooperation with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency and the Ikebana Club in Amman. The evening, whose proceeds benefited the Muslim Young Women's Society for special education, included a show of kimono, the Japanese traditional costume, Japanese folkloric shows and a flower exhibition. The evening was attended by several ministers, Japanese Ambassador Yui Ikeda and Mrs. Ikeda.

Libya urges Arab action in Lockerbie affair

CAIRO (AFP) — A Libyan envoy to Egypt called on the Arab League Saturday to take action in the Lockerbie affair following "new information" which he said proved the innocence of Libyans accused in the 1988 bombing. "New information shows that two Libyan citizens were not involved in this case," Abdel Ati Al Ebeidi said. "The information calls for a discussion (by the Arab League) to take whatever steps are necessary in light of this information." Ebeidi told journalists after talks with Foreign Minister Amr Musa. Mr. Ebeidi was apparently referring to a U.S. report implicating Iran in the bombing published in January in the Scottish newspaper The Daily Record. At the time Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid said the report "strengthens without a doubt the Libyan position and directs accusations towards parties other than Libya." He also hoped that the United States and Britain would reexamine their position on U.N. sanctions imposed on Libya in April 1992.

3 Iranians hanged for murder, robbery

TEHRAN (AFP) — Three Iranians were hanged in public in northwestern Iran on charges of murder, armed robbery and "spreading insecurity," the Hamsahri daily reported Saturday. The three men — Javad Taheri, Kavad Bahrampour and Ismail Mohammadi — were executed near Nakhadeh, in West Azarbaijan province. The suspects were found guilty of several murders, the paper said, but gave no further details. The death penalty has been in force for convicted armed robbers in Iran since 1989.

Militants kill Coptic Christian in Minya

MINYA (AFP) — Suspected Islamic militants on Saturday shot dead a Coptic Christian alleged to have collaborated with the authorities in the troubled southern province of Minya, Egyptian police said. Hanna Farass Mikhail, 75, died when the gunmen burst into his home and opened fire with automatic weapons. He was the mayor of Herz village, 280 kilometres south of Cairo. The outlawed fundamentalist movement Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah had accused him of being a charlatan and providing the authorities with information about militant activities. His death raised to 673 the number of people killed in unrest since the militants launched a violent anti-government campaign in March 1992.

Egypt detains journalists on camel routes

ASWAN (R) — Egyptian police arrested an American and a British journalist who tried to enter the country from Sudan via desert routes used for centuries by camel caravans, security sources said on Saturday. They said the two women were held for five days after trying to cross the border without permits with a group of herdsmen. They told police they were researching traditional desert journeys made by Sudanese camel traders who drive their camels hundreds of kilometres north for sale in Cairo. Police named the two as Angela Stephens, an American, and Lorraine Chitock, a Briton. The main crossroad between Egypt and Sudan, a ferry which shuttles between the northern and southern edges of Lake Nasser, has been closed for three months because of arguments over security arrangements between the two countries.

Somali militia clashes with airport looters; 2 dead

MOGADISHU (Agencies) — Two militiamen were killed when shooting broke out overnight at Mogadishu airport between looters and militia guarding the airport since the departure of U.N. peacekeepers, a Somali newspaper said Saturday.

The looters had invaded the airport, which has remained closed since the U.N. troops pulled out of Somalia almost two weeks ago, the report said.

Rival warlords General Mohammad Farah Aideded and the self-styled president Ali Mohammad, have failed to reopen the airport despite agreeing to do so.

Fuel and wood were among the goods looted from the airport, shut on Feb. 28 when the last U.N. flight left Mogadishu carrying U.N. Special Representative Victor Gbeho and his aides.

The airport is guarded by the Habr Gedir militia, which supports Gen. Aideded, and the Ahgal militia, which backs Mr. Ali Mahdi, both of whom have expressed concern that unless the militia are brought under control, it will be impossible to run either the port or airport.

The port reopened Thursday and an Egyptian ship carrying 60,000 tonnes of food and equipment docked without a tug.

Early Saturday the goods brought in by the ship went on sale in the capital's main markets.

Bot port officials were calling on the United Nations to

return vital equipment which they said the withdrawing peacekeepers had taken with them, and without which the port could not accommodate larger ships. Xog-Ogal said.

The paper quoted Somali Ports Cooperation General Manager Ahmad Hassao Dahir as saying: "We don't have tugboats and the other necessary facilities, so big vessels could either cause damage to the facility or the body of vessels. We demand the quick return of the equipment taken by U.N. Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) for security reasons."

The U.N. troops, who pulled out of Somalia under the protection of a six-nation task force, closed the port on Feb. 23.

The U.N. force took all essential port and airport equipment with it in the expectation that the clans would fight for both facilities, promising to return it once competent authorities were in place.

Somalis said two clashes broke out on Friday in the airport.

Clan elders intervened to broker a truce and on Saturday Mogadishu residents said the airport area was calm.

The clash underlined the fragility of the agreement between rival clans, reached after the U.N.'s departure, to share control of the airport and sea port.

Efforts to prevent a spiral into renewed chaos at the airport have been led by Gen. Aideded.

'Foreign' role reported in U.S. bombing 'plots'

NEW YORK (AP) — The defense in the trial of Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman has demanded that prosecutors turn over evidence they say might indicate foreign involvement in the World Trade Centre bombing.

Roger Stavis, a lawyer for defendant El Sayyid Nosair, asked prosecutors on Thursday for documentation provided by Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) informant Enad Salem that is referred to in a Jan. 17, 1993, letter to the FBI director.

The letter, written to justify the more than \$1 million promised to Mr. Salem for his help, said Mr. Salem "has documented the role of at least two foreign powers in these planned incidents," Mr. Stavis said.

The incidents appeared to be a reference to multiple plots that were allegedly being planned by Sheikh Abdul Rahman and his followers to attack the United States to change its Middle East policies.

Prosecutors say the 11 defendants were planning in 1993 to bomb the United Nations, FBI headquarters and two tunnels and a bridge

linking Manhattan and New Jersey as well as assassinate the Egyptian president and others.

Meanwhile, Defense Lawyer John Jacobs again asked U.S. District Judge Michael Mukasey to force prosecutors to turn over any new information related to Ramzi Yousef, the alleged mastermind of the trade centre bombing who was arrested last month in Pakistan.

Mr. Jacobs and Mr. Stavis are seeking information about foreign countries because proof of foreign involvement could be used to try to cripple the government's theory that Sheikh Abdul Rahman headed the conspiracy.

However, Mr. Mukasey warned the lawyers Thursday that just because "a foreign power or powers may have contributed in some fashion to that doesn't mean that other people were not involved."

Testimony in the trial that started Jan. 9 was suspended Thursday because one of the defendants was ill. The trial resumes on Monday.

COLUMN

Italian surgeon gets AIDS virus from scalpel cut

ROME (R) — An Italian surgeon contracted the HIV virus that causes AIDS in an accident with a scalpel while operating on a patient who was HIV-positive, an Italian researcher said Friday. Dr. Giuseppe Ippolito said it was the first documented case of transmission of the virus in such circumstances. Dr. Ippolito heads a team at Rome's Spallanzani Hospital that has conducted one of only two major studies into the occupational risk of AIDS among health care workers. He said the other study was in the United States. Confirming newspaper reports, Dr. Ippolito told Reuters that the accident occurred in an Italian hospital last year when the scalpel cut through the surgeon's protective surgical glove. He declined to identify the surgeon, even by sex, and would not say where in Italy the operation took place. "It is the first documented case of seroconversion in this way to my knowledge," Dr. Ippolito said in an interview. He said the surgeon had undergone an HIV test immediately after the nick to the hand. The test was negative but a follow-up test one month later was positive, he added. "We excluded all other possible means of transmission," he said. Dr. Ippolito said his team had recorded 2,342 cases of occupational exposure to HIV among health workers between 1986 and 1994.

Portuguese pretender to marry

LISBON (AFP) — The pretender to the defunct throne of Portugal, Dom Duarte, 49, Duke of Braganza, is to marry Isabel de Heredia, 28, according to a "royal" statement released Friday by his aide. The wedding date was not announced but sources in the bride's family said it would be May 6. The ceremony will be held at a monastery in Lisbon's historic Belem district on the banks of the Tagus, the statement said. The bride-to-be is the daughter of aristocratic parents who spent her childhood in what was then the Portuguese colony of Angola and then lived 10 years in Brazil. She returned to Portugal six years ago, the statement said. After the marriage she will have the title Princess Das Beiras.

German gets life for murder of gay lover

MUNICH (R) — A German man was sentenced to life in jail for killing his homosexual lover and chopping his body into pieces. Georg Haselberg, 33, had originally admitted murdering his 81-year-old lover and eating his internal organs, but later recanted his confession to police. The court rejected Mr. Haselberg's contention that the victim had died a natural death. It ruled he had smothered the older man with a pillow out of deep-seated hatred, taken his money and sliced up the corpse. Mr. Haselberg testified he had only wanted to dispose of his lover's body after he died in January 1993. Friends became concerned when they could not reach the victim, a diabetic with severe heart problems, by telephone. A subsequent search discovered his torso under the bed in his home. Other body parts were found packed in plastic bags in a rubbish container.

Drive-in safe heist becomes a drag

ANNECY, France (AFP) — Bumbling robbers dragged a stolen safe for more than a kilometre attached to the back of a pick-up truck Friday after an attempt at a drive-in heist went wrong. The three raiders were spotted by police as they dragged the safe, stolen from a supermarket, along a street looking for a quiet spot to put it onto the truck properly. The heist earlier ran-ran-ran the supermarket, smashing through plate-glass windows, doors and walls before attaching it to the back of the truck, and speeding off.